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ABSTRACT

This study sought to determine whether there is a set of in-school factors which might help explain the differences in dropout rates among schools with very similar student bodies. The study was designed as an in-depth ethnographic examination of four pairs of Chicago (Illinois) public high schools. One school in each pair had a high dropout rate and the other had a lower rate. The goal of the study was to determine whether the schools with the lower dropout rate in each pair differed in consistent ways from the schools with the higher dropout rate. The study found six major characteristics that distinguished the lower dropout rate schools from the others. These include: (1) stronger leadership from the principal and his or her administration; (2) more order and discipline in the halls, lunchrooms, and other common areas of the school; (3) better student attendance; (4) lower failure rates; (5) more active instruction and less seatwork in the classroom; and (6) more interaction between teachers and students in class. Common findings across all schools in the study are listed. Recommendations are made for improving school environments. A list of references is included. (PS)

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CHICAGO PANEL
ON PUBLIC SCHOOL POLICY AND FINANCE

ED287907

"WHERE'S ROOM 185?"
HOW SCHOOLS CAN REDUCE THEIR DROPOUT PROBLEM

PART I

**An Ethnographic Investigation of
Four Matched Pairs of Urban High Schools**

G. Alfred Hess, Jr.
Executive Director

Emily Wells
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Paul Liffman
Beatrice Kaplan
Ethnographers

UD025343

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The important contributions of Marcia Kuntz, who prepared an analysis of the curriculum offered at each school, and James Greer, who performed statistical analysis of quantitative data, are also gratefully acknowledged.

Lastly, we thank the Lloyd A. Fry Foundation, which also underwrote the Panel's original dropout study, for making this research effort possible. For the Fry Foundation's continuing concern for dropout reduction, and for the advice and encouragement of its director Ben Rothblatt, the Panel is deeply appreciative.

The Panel offers its sincere thanks to each of these individuals or groups.

"Where's Room 185?" is an on-site study of eight Chicago high schools. Researchers spent a month in each school looking for important differences which might affect the dropout rate. The schools were matched in four pairs, each school in a pair enrolling similar students but with significantly different dropout rates. The study was an effort to determine why one school in a pair had a lower rate than the other. In addition to extensive observation, researchers interviewed a random sample of teachers and students.

In order to avoid intruding on students' learning time, the investigators sought to interview them during their study halls or lunch periods. In one school, the ethnographer found many students were assigned study hall in Room 185, but he could never find the room. Students in that school had learned that being assigned a study hall in Room 185 meant they were not expected to attend school during that period. Room 185 was a computer scheduler's fiction, used most frequently for a student's first or last period of the day. Thus, the question "Where's Room 185?" became symbolic, to the reasearch team, of the school practices which shortchange Chicago students and probably contribute to the dropout problem. This study, based on eight months of school observation, looks at things schools can do to reduce their dropout rates.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Forty-three percent of all entering high school students in Chicago drop out before graduation. In *Dropouts from the Chicago Public Schools*, a study conducted by the Chicago Panel on Public School Policy and Finance and released in May, 1985, the Panel established that the two most important factors contributing to the dropout rate were below normal reading scores and overage freshmen. The dropout rate in the system's 63 high schools closely reflects the percentage of entering freshmen reading below normal and/or the percentage overage. Individual school dropout rates varied from 11% to 63%. Thus, the level of preparation of elementary school graduates was the largest factor correlating with school dropout rates.

However, dropout rates differed significantly among schools with similar student enrollments. Schools with almost identical student characteristics, including similar reading scores and percentage of overage freshmen, often had very different overall dropout rates. Further analysis of the data showed that statistically significant differences in the dropout rate did exist among pairs of schools which had been matched on reading scores, percentage of overage students, an index of poverty and racial and ethnic composition.

To determine whether there was a set of in-school factors which might help to explain the differences in dropout rates among schools with very similar student bodies, the present study was designed as an in-depth ethnographic examination of four pairs of Chicago public high schools. Each pair had similar student enrollments. Students at one pair (DuSable and Collins) were mainly inner city Blacks; at another (Wells and Bowen) they were predominantly inner-city Hispanics. At the third pair (Hubbard and Washington), the students had been predominantly White. Two vocational high schools (Simeon and Westinghouse), which selected the best prepared inner-city black students were selected as the final pair. Dropout rates varied from eight to seventeen percentage points between paired schools. While these differences are significant, they are far from the whole of the dropout problem. If the differences could be overcome, a number of potential dropouts would graduate, but the dropout rates at the four inner-city neighborhood schools would still be unacceptably high.

The overall goal was to determine whether the schools with the lower dropout rate in each pair differed in consistent ways from the schools with the higher dropout rates. The hypotheses guiding the study were drawn from a body of research known as "the effective schools literature." A number of studies conducted primarily among black, urban inner city elementary schools found that students performed better in schools under the leadership of a strong principal who set well-defined goals and priorities for teachers and students, schools in which an atmosphere of discipline and order prevailed, and in which students were expected to learn and were not allowed to fail. The study was looking for variations in factors which could be controlled by school officials.

Although the present study was conducted in high schools, it was anticipated that the important factors identified in elementary school research might also distinguish the lower dropout rate schools from the higher. It was expected that the schools with the lower dropout rates in each pair would have principals who exerted stronger leadership, a more disciplined and orderly atmosphere, better attendance, lower failure rates, and teachers who expected more of students.

In order to investigate so many complex and interwoven factors, an ethnographic study was designed in which a researcher spent an extended period of time in participant observation in each matched pair of schools. The study included formal questionnaires administered to a sample of students, teachers and administrators, structured classroom observations, and informal observation in the schools. This data was supplemented when possible by statistical data provided by the Chicago Board of Education and the schools.

The study found six major characteristics that distinguished the lower dropout rate schools from the higher dropout rate schools in each pair. These included: *1) stronger leadership from the principal and his or her administrative team, 2) more order and discipline in the halls, lunchrooms and other common areas of the school, 3)better student attendance, 4) lower failure rates, 5) more active instruction and less seatwork in the classroom, and 6) more interaction between teachers and students in class.* In addition to these factors which distinguished schools with lower dropout rates, the study also found factors in all schools which might contribute to a high student dropout rate. For example, most students received less than the 300 instructional minutes a day in class time mandated by state law. A culture of cutting prevailed among students, and in some schools student attendance was poorly monitored by administrators. Individual attention to each student averaged only a few minutes a day, and teachers complained of "burnout." Finally, although gangs compete with schools for the loyalty of students, at most schools they offered a quiet presence rather than an active disruption of activities.

As a result of this study, the Panel believes that there are steps which can be taken in individual high schools to reduce the dropout rate. These steps are not the full cure to this problem, for they do not address the level of unpreparedness at which students are leaving the system's elementary schools. However, they are concrete things which can be done to reduce the number of students at each school who leave before graduation. Therefore, the Panel recommends 1) that instructional time be increased by shifting to 50 minute periods, 2) that study halls be restructured to eliminate their use for gap filling, 3) that the school system mount an attack on the existing "culture of cutting," 4) that counseling services be reorganized and expanded, 5) that principals focus attention on establishing orderliness, both in student discipline and in building maintenance, and 6) that school staffs focus on improving attendance and reducing failure rates.

COMMON FINDINGS ACROSS ALL SCHOOLS

1. **CHICAGO PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOLS SHORTCHANGE STUDENTS ON INSTRUCTIONAL TIME.**

   State law requires that students receive "five clock-hours" (300 minutes) of instruction each day. Study halls but not lunch periods are considered part of this instructional time. In the general high schools over 75% of the students were taking six or fewer courses (240 or less instructional minutes). Schedules were padded with at least one, and frequently two, study halls or library periods. Rarely were these study halls used for academic purposes. More frequently, they served as "holding pens" where chaos reigned; such study halls undermined efforts to emphasize the importance of being in school and encouraged cutting. Some schools assigned fictional study halls at the beginning or end of the day which students were not expected to attend. State officials say this practice is clearly in violation of the law.

2. **A "CULTURE OF CUTTING" EXISTS IN CHICAGO PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOLS.**

   A clear pattern of cutting early morning and late afternoon classes was observed in all eight studied schools. Thus, many students further reduced the already shortened instructional school day. In addition students selectively cut mid-day classes which they did not like or for which they were unprepared. In most of the studied schools, there were no effective plans to counter the popular practice of cutting. Indeed, all schools engaged routinely in practices which encouraged it, for example, the assignment of students to fictional study halls which they were not expected to attend. Cutting appears to contribute to the dropout rate at all of these city high schools by allowing students to fall further behind in their work.

3. **INDIVIDUAL STUDENT ATTENTION BY INSTRUCTORS AVERAGES LESS THAN TEN MINUTES PER DAY ACROSS ALL SCHOOLS.**

   With forty minute classes and 25 to 30 students per class, at most teachers can devote only a minute of individual attention per student each period. In many classes, teachers spent even less time in individual instruction. That means the average student accumulated only five or six minutes of direct teacher attention all day. This is in sharp contrast to elementary schools where students receive more individual attention. Counselors, also, have little time for individual attention to students, due both to a high student-counselor ratio and to attendance and discipline related activities which claim time away from normal student contact.

4. **"BURNOUT" IS A CONSTANT COMPLAINT AMONG TEACHERS, ESPECIALLY THOSE WITH TEN OR MORE YEARS OF EXPERIENCE.**

Those who had been teaching for ten or more years (and this was a majority on all eight faculties) were most demoralized by what they felt was lack of support from the Board of Education and from school administrators. They particularly complained about the unavailability of phones to contact the homes of students, about excessive paperwork (especially the reporting of cutting and tardiness which resulted in no behavior change), and about the laxness of school discipline to back up their classroom efforts. Contributing significantly to the sense of "burnout" was the perception that students were entering high school less motivated and less prepared to do the work, although test scores of entering students for the last four years have not changed significantly. Many felt this decline in student interest and preparation had occurred most noticeably in the past five or six years. At the same time, teachers who had taught for many years felt trapped in their jobs by the need for a paycheck and the difficulty of making a career change.

5. **GANGS COMPETE WITH SCHOOLS FOR THE LOYALTY OF STUDENTS. WHILE THEY WERE A PRESENCE AT MOST OF THE SCHOOLS STUDIED, AT ONLY ONE SCHOOL DID THEY ACTIVELY DISRUPT SCHOOL OPERATION.**

In at least the four schools with the highest dropout rates (both schools in the two pairs with the higher rates) students and staff recognized gangs as a major influence in the lives of many students outside of school. In an attempt to maintain control over gang activity inside of school, school officials refused to allow students to wear gang symbols and identification in all studied schools. Gang members were observed painting gang symbols in some schools, and in some schools students complained of being recruited by gang members in the lunch rooms or harassed outside of the school. However, the majority of students at all of the schools except DuSable found them to be relatively safe havens from most aggressive gang activity.

6. **SOME SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS ARE VERY LAX IN MONITORING THE PRESENCE OF INDIVIDUAL STUDENTS.**

In some schools administrative officials kept poor records of the programs and schedules of individual students. Monitoring of classroom and school attendance at most schools was inconsistent. Some observers were unable to find students in the places they were expected to be, even when office records indicated they were present. In some schools, teacher absence reports were not efficiently tracked. In some cases, teachers stopped marking students "absent" after a number of consecutive misses, which the school office interpreted as meaning the student was present; this resulted in the anomaly of missing students having a record of near perfect attendance.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS FROM THE PAIRED COMPARISONS

1. **THE PRINCIPAL AT THE SCHOOL WITH THE LOWER DROPOUT RATE IN EACH PAIR WAS JUDGED TO EXERT STRONGER OVERALL LEADERSHIP.**

   During the period 1978-84, in three of the four pairs of schools the school with the lower dropout rate was headed by a principal who provided stronger leadership than did the principal in the school with the higher dropout rate. Simeon and Westinghouse did not conform to this finding. Evidence from the study suggests that the type of leadership role the principal assumes may affect the dropout rate in several ways. First, principals who strongly enforced student and teacher discipline insured a more orderly and disciplined atmosphere in the school. Second, the more effective principals held and communicated clearly a set of expectations to students and teachers. Third, the principals in the lower dropout school in each pair tended to have a clearer vision for the school and often had a more authoritarian style of management. Finally, the principals of the lower dropout schools generally used staff more efficiently. In fact, in the high schools the ability of the administrative team of principal and assistant principals to plan and carry out programs and policies effectively appeared to be of primary importance.

2. **STUDENTS IN THE LOWER DROPOUT SCHOOL WERE MORE ORDERLY AND DISCIPLINED IN THE HALLS, LUNCHROOM AND OTHER COMMON AREAS OF THE SCHOOL.**

   There was less tardiness and disorderly behavior such as food fights among students in schools with the lower dropout rate in three of the four pairs. The exception was Bowen and Wells where no difference in discipline could be perceived. While differences between schools in discipline in the halls and lunchroom were noticeable, the variation in classroom discipline was greater within a school.

3. **STUDENT ATTENDANCE AT THE LOWER DROPOUT SCHOOL WAS SIGNIFICANTLY BETTER IN THREE OUT OF THE FOUR PAIRS OF SCHOOLS.**

   Between 1978 and 1984, attendance rates were generally three or four percentage points higher in the lower dropout schools. Attendance often received different emphasis at the schools with the lower rates as well. It was also noted that the two pairs of schools with the lower dropout rates had better attendance than the two pairs with the higher dropout rates. The exception was the Bowen-Wells pair. In some years, but not in others, Bowen, the school with the lower dropout rate, had better attendance.

4. **THE SCHOOL WITH THE LOWER DROPOUT RATE ALSO HAD A LOWER FAILURE RATE IN THE YEARS 1984-86.**

Overall, for the years 1984-86, fewer students in the lower dropout school in three of the pairs had one or more failures. The exception was the Bowen-Wells pair where Bowen, the school with the lower dropout rate, had higher failure rates in all except one grade. Further, the two pairs of schools on the lower end of the dropout scale (Washington-Hubbard and Westinghouse-Simeon) had lower failure rates overall. Schools varied in their policies regarding promotion and failure rates. Lower dropout schools in two pairs demoted freshmen or sophomores as well as juniors (Collins and Westinghouse). Reducing the failure rate was a stated goal in two of the lower dropout schools (Washington and Westinghouse). No data was available for the period 1978-83.

5. **TEACHERS IN THE SCHOOL WITH THE LOWER DROPOUT RATE DEVOTED MORE TIME TO ACTIVE CLASSROOM INSTRUCTION OF THE ENTIRE CLASS.**

When question and answer discussions or lectures were defined as active instruction and contrasted with supervised seatwork or unsupervised individual work, there was significantly more time spent in active instruction in all of the lower dropout schools in each pair with the exception of Westinghouse and Simeon where there was no difference.

6. **MORE INTERACTIVE TEACHING TOOK PLACE IN THE LOWER DROPOUT SCHOOL.**

Teachers in the lower dropout school spent a greater percentage of their time teaching interactively in three out of the four pairs. Interactive teaching was defined as leading a discussion or continuously supervising individual work; non-interactive teaching was defined as lecturing or assigning unsupervised seatwork. In the Bowen-Wells pair, less interactive teaching occurred at Bowen, but the difference was slight.

7. **THE PHYSICAL FACILITIES WERE IN BETTER CONDITION AT THE SCHOOL WITH THE LOWER DROPOUT RATE IN SOME CASES.**

Where differences in physical facilities were significant, the schools in better condition had the lower dropout rate. In two of the pairs of schools, the appearance and maintenance of the facilities in the higher dropout schools were unsatisfactory. In the other two pairs facilities were similarly maintained. Although much of the difference could be accounted for by newness of the building (Collins) or its better suitability to house a school (Westinghouse), there were also some differences in the maintenance and in the resourcefulness of the principal in getting extra money or organizing parents to lobby for funds (Westinghouse). While the condition and maintenance of physical facilities cannot be directly related to the dropout rate, it does appear to contribute to the overall atmosphere of the school.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **EXPAND INSTRUCTIONAL TIME TO 300 MINUTES BY SHIFTING TO 50 MINUTE PERIODS.**

   Since 50% of students in general high schools now take six periods of instruction, six 50 minute periods would give students the minimal educational opportunity intended by state law. This pattern is presently employed in many other Illinois school districts. While this would require some adjustment of school programming and teacher scheduling, these administrative difficulties are not significant enough to warrant continued short-changing of Chicago high school students.

2. **RESTRUCTURE STUDY HALLS TO PROVIDE ADEQUATE ACADEMIC OPPORTUNITIES OR ACTIVITY OPTIONS, ELIMINATING THEIR USE FOR GAP FILLING.**

   The current pattern of placing students in study halls serving primarily as "holding pens" and of putting fictional study hall periods on student schedules communicates to them that the staff does not expect students to be learning or even attending school during these periods. It is a short step for students to decide which classes to attend. Study halls in the middle of the day must be restructured to be significant academic opportunities or reconceptualized as activity periods without academic content. Students must be convinced that time spent in school is significant or they will degrade all time spent in school. Using available computers for programming, administrators can tighten up student schedules to eliminate "holding pen" study halls, as has been done at Westinghouse.

3. **THE SCHOOL SYSTEM MUST MOUNT AN ATTACK ON THE "CULTURE OF CUTTING" WHICH CURRENTLY EXISTS.**

   As long as the behavioral norm at high schools is to cut those classes which a student does not like or for which a student is not prepared, failure and dropout rates will remain high. Chicago high schools must attack cutting systematically. Schools must root out their own practices which encourage cutting, such as fictional and non-productive study halls. They must improve their record keeping to provide accurate and timely information that identifies cutters. The school administration must devise suitable punitive measures which do more than simply make the punishment resemble the offense (suspensions may be seen as officially imposed class cuts). They must expand the curricular offerings to make school more exciting and attractive to young people. They must be more flexible in adjusting programs for students which turn out to be inappropriate.

4. **COUNSELING SERVICES MUST BE DRAMATICALLY EXPANDED AND REORGANIZED.**

   In order to give students more individual assistance with their academic concerns and personal problems, counseling services need to be both expanded and reorganized. While

numerous groups have called for the rapid expansion of the number of counselors in high schools, it was apparent that "more of the same" is not an adequate solution to the needs of many dropout prone youth. Adolescents need more individual attention than today's high schools, organized on the automated, industrial production model, can provide. Counselors should be more focused on knowing their students, and being known by them, to provide the personal assistance students need to be successful in high school. Attendance and discipline duties can be handled by non-professional staff at less expense. If the Board is unable to restructure the student services staff in some such fashion, it should consider contracting with outside agencies to provide such direct counseling services. This personalized attention is particularly critical for students failing courses, truants, transfers from other schools, and newly entering freshmen.

5. **PRINCIPALS MUST FOCUS ATTENTION ON ESTABLISHING ORDERLINESS IN THE SCHOOLS, BOTH IN STUDENT DISCIPLINE AND IN BUILDING MAINTENANCE.**

Effective schools do not operate in a chaotic environment. Schools with lower dropout rates were more orderly for the most part. Discipline and order are responsibilities of the school principal. The faculty and career service staff must be enlisted in a common effort to create and maintain a school climate which is conducive to learning. Order must be maintained in the halls, lunchrooms and public space of the school. Graffiti must be immediately removed. Lockers, doors and equipment must be kept in good repair. Neglected schools communicate a disregard for the students housed within them, which encourages further damage to property and persons. The Board of Education must commit the resources to adequately maintain a conducive learning environment. Such resources must be more available to those schools where the problem is greatest, thus, a need factor must be included in the allocation formula. Then principals and engineers who are not capable of maintaining an orderly educational environment may be held accountable, and ultimately reassigned to other jobs more commensurate with their abilities.

6. **SCHOOL STAFFS MUST FOCUS ON IMPROVING ATTENDANCE AND REDUCING FAILURE RATES.**

Schools with lower dropout rates have better attendance records and lower failure rates. These areas are interrelated and can both be influenced by dedicated effort and a cooperative approach by school staffs who want to see their students succeed. But, too often, school personnel find it easier to ignore, or worse, shut out the poorly performing and infrequently attending students. Many on Chicago faculties have the attitude, "Let's get rid of the difficult students so those who want to learn can." While this may be understandable, it directly contributes to high dropout rates and cannot be tolerated further. Faculties which, without lowering academic standards, focus on keeping students in school and progressing successfully through their courses have lower dropout rates. This is an arena

in which the educational leadership of the principal can be quite powerful. At very least, the automatic connection between attendance and course grades should be broken. Passing a class should imply more than mere presence, and failure should indicate non-mastery of the material, not non-attendance. Present school policy regarding this issue is correct, but the practice followed in schools is often different than the policy. The practice of imposing failure for absence, whether recorded as such or not, should be immediately discontinued. Instead, the punishment for cutting should relate to attendance, not grades.

7. **PRINCIPALS MUST REQUIRE MORE INTERACTIVE INSTRUCTION IN THE CLASS AND MUST WORK TO REDUCE INTRUSIVE INTERRUPTIONS AND STUDENT DISRUPTION.**

In the schools with the lower dropout rates, there was more active classroom instruction, and the interaction between teachers and students was more extensive. However, in too many classes in all eight schools observed, teachers avoided interactive instruction, either by assigning unsupervised seatwork while they did other work or no work, or by relying upon a lecture approach. Principals and their assistants must take a more active role in requiring more interactive teaching through classroom observation, evaluation and remediation. State law now requires such action. If additional ancillary staff is needed for this to be accomplished, this should be provided. At the same time, principals must work to eliminate intrusive announcements and messengers which interrupt the classroom. And they must work to ensure that students move promptly into class and are not allowed to loiter in the halls, disturbing the learning process by entering class late.

8. **IMPROVE STAFF DEVELOPMENT AND EVALUATION EFFORTS FOR HIGH SCHOOL ADMINISTRATIVE TEAMS, ESPECIALLY FOR THE PRINCIPAL.**

The appointment of a person to become a high school principal is recognition of talents, training, and experience beyond the level of most certificated school staff. However, the skills and focus required to be an effective principal are different from those which lead to their selection. Principals need careful supervision and training to become skilled in those areas which distinguish effective schools from those which are less successful. This same training must be available to the other professional members of the administrative team. In high schools, the principal's effectiveness depends upon the cohesiveness of his or her administrative team and their ability to coalesce the faculty into a cooperative, common effort. Not all principals have these skills, and regular training must be provided for them and for their assistants. Principals who demonstrate a prolonged inability to acquire or use these skills, or to maintain a focus on those activities which make a school effective, should be returned to the classroom or reassigned to other administrative duties.

"WHERE'S ROOM 185?"
HOW SCHOOLS CAN REDUCE THEIR DROPOUT PROBLEM

PART I

An Ethnographic Investigation of
Four Matched Pairs of Urban High Schools

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December, 1986

METHODOLOGY

Eight Chicago high schools were selected for in-depth, ethnographic investigation; that is, long term participant-observation. The focus of this research was to determine internal factors that affected the dropout rate in each high school. The schools were grouped into four matched pairs. The characteristics of the entering students at the two schools in each pair were quite similar, but the schools had significantly different dropout rates.

This study follows an earlier report *Dropouts From the Chicago Public Schools*, an aggregate analysis of dropouts from the Chicago Public Schools for the classes of 1982, 1983 and 1984. The unit of analysis for that study, as well as this one, is the individual high school. Data were collected on the dropout rates for these classes, and also on those factors which could plausibly affect the dropout rate. These included data on reading scores, age distribution, race, and the level of poverty. Reading score data were collected particularly to provide a measure of readiness for high school work.

Analysis of these data showed that the dropout rate for the classes of 1982, 1983, and 1984 was strongly associated with both below normal reading scores and high numbers of students entering high school overage. The dropout rate was less strongly correlated with the racial composition of the student body or the level of poverty of the neighborhood in which the school was situated. Most importantly, statistical analysis revealed that of the two -- below average reading scores and percentage overage -- poor reading scores were much more strongly associated with the rate of dropping out from Chicago high schools. The percentage of students overage remains very important, but it is the inability to perform at high school academic levels that is most closely associated with high rates of dropouts from Chicago public high schools. The level of association between reading scores and overage students and the dropout rate is clear, linear, and quite striking (in a regression where both of these independent variables are entered into the equation, they explain over 80% of the variance of the dropout rate). Despite this, there were clear differences in the dropout rates between high schools that the statistical analysis was unable to explain. Some schools had higher than expected dropout rates, and others, with similar students, had lower than expected rates. It was apparent that in these high schools, where there seemed to be something about the schools that affected the dropout rate, on-site ethnographic observation and analysis were appropriate.

The first task was to identify reasonably matched pairs of Chicago high schools in which to do comparative ethnographic research. The aim was not to find schools that were alike in all important respects, but to find pairs of schools in which dropout rates differed, but the student population was similar in terms of reading scores, age structure, race, and poverty level. The question was whether the difference in dropout rates might have occurred by chance or was statistically significant. Since the unit of analysis was the individual high school, regression analysis was employed, and residuals of these schools on the important variables were examined. These variables were reading scores, percent overage, and the combination of both of these factors.

The regression analysis isolated a number of different sets of schools in which the student bodies were relatively well matched on reading scores, percentage of overage students, racial composition and a community poverty index. Eight sets of schools were presented to the Chicago Board of Education. Since the goal of the study was to determine why dropout rates differed for the classes of 1982 - 1984, it was deemed important to have some continuity of program and administration in the selected schools for the eight year period from 1978 through the present. With the assistance of Board officials, four pairs of schools were selected: Washington and Hubbard, Bowen and Wells, Collins and DuSable, and Westinghouse and Simeon.

The dropout rates for the class of 1982 in the four pairs of schools ranged from 22.1% to 58.5% (as determined by the earlier study conducted by the Chicago Panel). Table 1 shows the variables on which the schools in each pair were matched and the dropout rate for the class of 1982.

Table 1

CHARACTERISTICS ON WHICH THE PAIRS OF SCHOOLS WERE MATCHED

Class of 1982

SCHOOL	% NORMAL READING	PERCENT OVERAGE	POVERTY RATE	RACIAL COMPOSITION Wh.	Bl.	His.	As.	DROPOUT RATE
DuSable	27.7	36.8	77.9	0.0	99.8	0.0	0.0	58.5
Collins	26.1	33.4	65.8	0.0	99.8	0.0	0.0	48.1
Wells	30.8	34.9	40.3	12.1	25.8	61.7	0.0	55.6
Bowen	30.9	32.5	23.6	1.7	58.7	38.7	0.1	47.7
Hubbard	68.0	22.6	4.7	85.3	2.9	9.7	1.2	40.4
Washington	71.0	19.8	4.2	83.5	0.3	13.8	0.8	23.5
Simeon	75.8	20.2	46.9	0.0	100.0	0.0	0.0	34.1
Westinghouse	85.0	13.0	64.0	0.2	99.8	0.0	0.0	22.1

Figure 1 illustrates the relationship between reading scores and dropout rates in the four pairs of schools in the study. While the reading scores in each pair are similar, dropout rates are significantly different in each pair of schools. The slope line represents the expected dropout rate. In each pair, one school is above the line (has a higher than expected dropout rate) and one is below it.

Figure 1

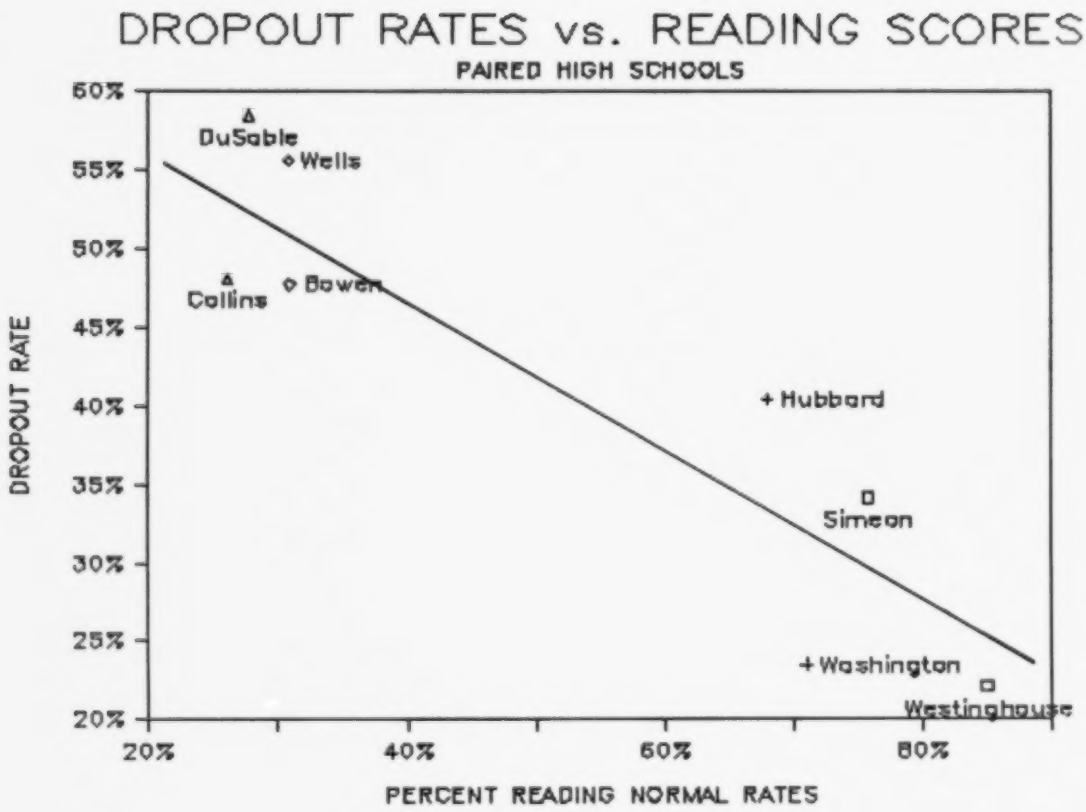


Table 2 presents the results of the regression analysis for the four selected pairs of schools. The dependent variable (or the factor to be explained) in all cases was the dropout rate for Chicago high schools. The residuals presented here are measured in increments of standard deviations from the mean (or average) of the variable in question (either percentage reading below average, percentage overage, or a combination of these factors). The calculation and measurement of standard deviations is one way to understand the distribution of one variable. From the mean of the sample, one standard deviation covers 66.7% of all cases (33.3% above the mean and 33.3% below); the second standard deviation covers all but about 4% of the cases. The results presented on Table 2 provide us with a measure of the differences between these Chicago high schools on these factors. Furthermore, the results here are directly comparable and the effects of below normal reading scores and percentage overage can be added to arrive at a combined residual.

Table 2

RESULTS OF RESIDUAL ANALYSIS, SELECTED CHICAGO HIGH SCHOOLS
Dependent Variable = Dropout Rate

SCHOOL	COMBINED RESIDUAL	BELOW NORMAL READING SCORES	PERCENT OVERAGE
DuSable	0.451	0.334	0.606
Collins	-0.390	-1.060	-0.277
Wells	0.870	1.120	0.493
Bowen	-0.136	-0.098	-0.203
Hubbard	1.040	1.300	0.114
Washington	-1.330	-1.080	-1.620
Simeon	0.342	0.565	-0.380
Westinghouse	-0.668	-0.653	-0.958

N = 63

Table 2 indicates that there are significant differences between the schools chosen for ethnographic analysis in this study. The most important measure is the first column of results, the combined residual of both below normal reading scores and percent overage. In nearly every case, the difference in the residual for each paired school is a full standard deviation. In the case of DuSable and Collins, the difference is still substantial. Not surprisingly, the differences between each of these pairs of schools is greatest for below normal reading scores (where there is a full standard deviation between the schools in each pairing), but less so for the residual of percent overage entering students.

After the selection of the eight schools, permission to conduct the study was obtained from the eight principals in an initial interview with each. Four ethnographers, one for each pair of schools, conducted the research in the schools.

The study was conducted during March, April and May of 1986. Each ethnographer spent a total of eight weeks in one pair of schools. The ethnographers alternated between the two schools of their pairs in two-week observation intervals.

There were three main components to the ethnographic study: interviews with a random sample of teachers, students and administrative staff; structured and informal observations in the school; and the collection of statistical data and printed information.

First, in order to insure some comparability among the pairs of schools, it was decided to conduct extensive interviews with a stratified random sample of students, teachers and other staff in each school. These interviews covered a wide range of topics, some drawn from the "effective schools" literature. Questions were designed to elicit information and opinions about such things as the curriculum, school policies on attendance, failure rates, promotion, discipline, management style and leadership of the principal, the general atmosphere for learning, frustrations and rewards in teaching, and the perceived "good" and "bad" things about each school.

Stratified random samples of 20 teachers and 20 students from each school were selected. In each school five math, five English and 10 teachers from other departments were chosen randomly from personnel lists provided by the school. With the assistance of the programmer, six freshmen, six sophomores, four juniors and four seniors were also randomly selected for interviews in each school. Finally, the principal, the building engineer, and three other administrative staff (such as assistant principal, discipline officer, attendance officer, guidance counselor or programmer) were interviewed in each school.

The second component to the ethnographic study was structured and informal observation in the schools. In the structured observations, ethnographers sat in 20 classes in each school. Ten of the classes were taught by teachers interviewed for the study. These classroom observations, thus, not only provided data on what went on in the classrooms, but also served as a check on information provided by teachers in interviews. The ethnographers observed teaching methods, time spent by the teacher on various tasks, discipline in the classroom, activities of students, and actions taken by teachers in regard to cuts, student tardiness and other disciplinary problems.

The ethnographers spent the entire school day in the school. When they were not interviewing or observing classes, they conducted informal observations and conversations in the lunchrooms, halls, libraries, and teacher lounges and offices. These informal observations and conversations often provided important insights into what were the real issues and concerns in a school, as well as providing a check on how closely what people said corresponded to what they did.

Finally, the ethnographers collected data from the individual schools on course offerings, attendance policies, disciplinary actions, failure rates, promotional policies, staff positions, and the attendance, failure, and discipline records for the sampled 20 students. North Central Association evaluation reports and other information regarding special dropout, attendance and recruitment programs were also obtained. The overall goal was to gather as much information as possible about all aspects of the schools which could conceivably have some bearing on the dropout rate.

In addition to the information collected in the schools, data were obtained from the Board of Education on attendance rates, failure rates,

length of teacher tenure at each school, racial and ethnic composition of teachers and students, and the curriculum and courses for each of the eight schools.

Methodological Problems

Four major methodological problems were encountered in the study: the use of ethnographic methods to seek the reasons for a difference in dropout rates two to four years in the past; recent changes in the administrations in three of the eight schools; differences in ethnographer perceptions and interpretations of events in the pairs of schools; and differences among the pairs of schools which, in some instances, were greater than the differences between the higher and lower dropout schools in each pair.

The study sought explanations for differences in dropout rates between matched schools for the classes of 1982, 1983 and 1984. However, by its nature, the ethnographic study provided the best information about present conditions in the schools. It can not be assumed that present conditions necessarily corresponded to those of two or more years ago. Indeed, three of the schools - Westinghouse, Hubbard and Collins - had new principals. In all three cases, the present administrations were considerably different from the previous ones. In order to overcome this problem, teachers and administrators were questioned in the formal interviews about past administrations and policies and about changes in the school during their tenure. Ethnographers in the three schools with recent principal changes also sought out information in informal conversations about conditions under previous principals. Whenever possible statistical data from the present and previous years (on attendance, failure rates, TAP scores, for example) were collected for comparison.

The different ethnographers had somewhat varying perceptions and foci in conducting the study. To insure that there was overall comparability, the same methodology was followed by all in selecting the samples, administering the questionnaires and carrying out the structured observations. The research team met weekly to share problems and findings. Although some differences among the ethnographic descriptions (Part II) can be noted, the crucial differences for the study were those between schools in the matched pairs. Since each ethnographer covered one of the matched pairs, the differences within a pair were not confounded by differences in ethnographers. Beyond this problem, however, some important similarities were observed in all eight high schools.

Finally, differences among pairs of schools were greater in some instances than differences within a pair. When there were important differences between the four schools on the high end of the dropout scale and the four on the low end, this has been pointed out in the analysis. For example, differences in attendance were more significant between the four highest dropout rate schools and the four with the lowest dropout rates than between the individual schools in each pair.

THE EFFECTIVE SCHOOLS LITERATURE AND THE STUDY OF CHICAGO HIGH SCHOOLS

This section looks at studies that deal specifically with the "effective schools" approach to evaluating educational institutions. The "effective schools" literature emphasizes that the staffs, and particularly the principals, can affect the quality of education offered at all schools, and particularly at inner city schools serving poor, minority students.

Ronald Edmonds (1979), a central figure in the effective schools movement until his untimely death, was a leader of the reaction against the idea, promoted by the controversial Coleman report (1966), that low achievement by poor children was due to certain inherent disabilities. Edmonds held that "...pupil family background neither causes nor precludes elementary school institutional effectiveness" (Edmonds 1979:21). Edmonds studied inner city schools which were both effective and ineffective to determine the significant factors differentiating the two types. The effective poor black schools he studied were no less poor and black than the ineffective schools.

Edmonds focused attention on leadership *within* the school; he found that effective schools have strong, optimistic, disciplinarian principals who set the tone of the school, help determine pedagogy, and take personal responsibility for monitoring the level of teaching by visiting classrooms frequently. He also emphasized the importance of an orderly educational climate in the schools, and the conviction of teachers that their students could learn successfully. He noted that regular monitoring of academic progress through testing and assessment was a critical factor for effective schools.

Rosenholtz (1985), in an excellent theoretical overview of the effective schools literature, pointed out that "...principals of effective schools have a unitary mission of improved student learning, and their actions convey the certainty that these goals can be attained." In the ideal scenario, principals are able to hand pick, or at least motivate, a personally committed, united staff team who are gratified by teaching basic skills and excited by their part in being allowed to help design curriculum. Such a staff is "like-minded," even uniform, in its adherence to managerial policies, but it retains "technical autonomy"--the right to formulate pedagogy on a democratic committee level and to run their classrooms as they see fit.

Edmonds pointed out that effective principals not only set the tone from above, they also support their teachers' efforts both materially and pedagogically. Indeed, Edmonds found that sometimes the impetus in turnaround schools comes from a "...self-generating teacher corps with a critical mass of dedicated people" (1979:22). However, Edmonds also cited evidence that the faculty had *less* influence over educational decisions in effective schools than they did in anarchistic ineffective ones (1979:17). Other effective schools research has indicated that an

activist parents group that insists that minimum academic standards be met can be very beneficial. It must be emphasized that this refers to voluntary, parent-initiated action rather than dutiful compliance with school-initiated meetings.

Glenn's (1981) discursive and detailed analysis of three elementary schools found a hierarchy of priorities in effective schools which were not dependent on funding: explicit, clear objectives for achievement, considerable time invested in staff development so that teachers can teach the basics well, joint planning by principals and staff, and efficient scheduling of staff activities (such planning being one staff member's specific responsibility). Glenn also found, in contrast to Rosenholtz, that effective principals do not always get involved in all the red tape necessary to eliminate inferior teachers--a wise move in bureaucratic, unionized, urban school systems in which firing a teacher is a near impossibility. Instead, effective principals ally themselves with a bloc of effective teachers; this structure tends to ostracize or re-animate below par teachers.

Again, taking some of the focus away from principals, Glenn found that the arrival of any highly skilled person (e.g., a curriculum specialist, superintendent, or other administrator) was often the start of the "turnaround" at an ineffective school. Glenn also recommended on-site teacher training, merit pay, teacher evaluations, and provisions for extra work.

The atmosphere that characterizes an effective school faculty is one of consensus, under which "...institutional values become accepted as objective facts rather than opinions" (pg. 363). Indeed, Rosenholtz concluded her discussion with the claim that in effective inner city elementary schools, "Since values represent group concerns as well as personal commitment, there is a binding--if not moral--aspect to them that forms the basis of social control and reduces the possibility of opportunistic behavior" (pg. 382). Both principals and teachers in effective schools remain there for some time; low absenteeism and turnover rates are hallmarks of such schools.

Another hallmark of effectiveness is that the teachers have a collegial (rather than isolated) and a professional (rather than commiserative) relationship with each other and with the principal. Effective teachers are not characterized as marching unsupervised to the beats of their different drummers.

Ideally, there is a delicate balance between charismatic, compelling leadership and machine-like procedure; leadership which evokes and reflects the voluntary cooperation of staff and the growth of students. "Agreement about goals and means to achieve them increases the school's capacity for rational planning and action. There is an organizational basis for directing behavior, for motivating behavior, for justifying behavior, and for evaluating behavior" (pg. 360). Perhaps this is the most difficult of all social formulas to codify, though many individual teachers in their personal relationships in class do achieve such balance.

While Edmonds cited results to the effect that staff in improving schools are less satisfied and have lower morale than those presumably complacent teachers in declining schools, Rosenholtz emphasizes the importance of morale building in effective schools.

Teachers in effective schools focus on raising student achievement rather than on discipline or paperwork. Effective teachers and principals also continually monitor and reward student progress, though this presumably does not mean transforming schools into training camps for nationally normed achievement tests.

On a somewhat more modest level, effective schools differ from ineffective ones in that the rules are clear and uniformly enforced, and the educational goals are concrete, consensual, and operationalized step by step rather than in some abstract way. As the recent Carnegie study which advocated increasing the prestige, financial rewards, and professionalism of teaching also pointed out, "...central to a school's functioning is its ability to motivate teachers to make continuous contributions to it rather than to some competing organization...that is, the rewards of teaching must outweigh the frustrations" (pg. 355). It is a sign, if not a cause, of success when everyone in the educational enterprise senses that there is a point to the effort. Principal support as well as student success are important for sustaining high teacher morale. Effective schools also seem to change students' perception of their chances in life, with at least dramatically higher test scores the result.

On an even more basic level, the physical environment is of great importance; a safe attractive building has a good psychological effect on the people in it. Another basic requirement for effectiveness is that the curriculum should be oriented toward basic skills, math and reading, even if this means limiting the breadth of knowledge offered in the school.

Chicago schools have been described in some of the effective schools literature. Gregory and Mueller (1978) described one such elementary school after an in-depth ethnographic study. A key feature in that description was the conception of the faculty as co-parents of their students. The principal emphasized that students seek support and recognition from teachers, and that playing that double role is important in nurturing the motivation of students. Further, the principal emphasized the necessity of interactive teaching, with a great deal of student-teacher exchange, and of active classroom instruction over extensive seatwork. However, from the current perspective, this case also shows the difficulty of creating effective schools in an urban setting, for the principal has since been promoted "up and out" of local schools, serving now as a district superintendent.

In his historical overview of anthropological studies of schools, John Ogbu (1981) stresses that when the field became organized in the sixties, a major thrust was the "cultural conflict perspective." This initial orientation focused on the transactional barriers to effective teaching created by ethnic and linguistic differences between students

and their teachers. This literature focused on the importance of "communicative etiquettes" and the power relationships in the classroom such etiquettes entailed.

However, this transactional "microethnography" approach has been criticized because while it *describes* classroom problems, it does not look at the forces operating outside the classroom and doesn't lend itself to the clear policy guidelines that would improve the situation. On the first point, Ogbu concludes that while in-service training to bridge the student-teacher culture gap may help, "...we are skeptical that any policy that does not simultaneously address itself to the economic and other subordinations of caste-like minorities [i.e., the Black, Latino, and Native American "underclass"] will have more than a superficial and temporary impact on the problem of minority school failure" (pg. 13). To this end, Ogbu calls for studies that show the functional linkages between "micro" and "macro-ethonography," specifically "how blacks perceive and interpret their schooling in relation to their own perception of their social and economic realities" (pg. 16)--i.e., what he calls the "job ceiling."

Also called for is a look at the school staff's perception of the students' potential. One way in which this aspect can be measured is by examining the degree to which grades reflect student effort; it was found in one study that students in ineffective "underclass" schools tend to always get the same grades regardless of performance, a practice which does not reinforce students' appreciation of conventional academic "survival strategies" (pg. 20). According to Ogbu's embracing formulation, students may seek success through competing, alternative survival strategies depending on how they perceive their chances for recognition and success. According to his scheme, students can work to change the limits (i.e., through community and political work); they can evade the limits (i.e., through hustling and gangs in the street economy); or they can work within those conventional limits like most people do.

Part of what determines which road students choose is how well the survival strategies they know from the outside community fit with what they are taught--that is, whether they see the "...goals, standards, and instructional approaches of the schools as legitimate" (pg. 22) and hence play by the rules, or if they see their chances for success through conventional work or community action as limited and thus figure that there are smarter ways to play.

In criticism of effective schools literature, most studies have usually focused on elementary schools, where teachers and students are both easier to mold, rather than secondary schools. Certainly many faculty interviewed in this high school study were resentful of overly forceful principals. It is difficult to imagine in the schools observed in the present study, teachers who would rally round the principals and ostracize under-performers as the teachers in the Gregory and Mueller study did. Also, teaching itself is more complex and diversified in high school than it is in elementary school. As a result, the principal faces added difficulty in transcending the lines of academic disciplines to be the "educational leader" called for in the literature.

Moreover, high schools are simply larger and more bureaucratic than elementary schools. At least in big cities, they are constrained by procedural inertia, centralized decision-making, and severely constrained resources. These factors make achieving the local school hegemony called for in the literature more difficult, though such techniques as closed campuses seem somewhat useful for limiting exposure to the street economy for a few hours a day. The use of "holding pen" study halls, however, and the existence of a "culture of cutting" combine to reduce the effectiveness of attempts to restrict students to the school grounds during the day. Moreover, the effective schools studies have not as yet been able to pinpoint the most critical factors in making a school "turnaround," though a rare mixture of forceful and charismatic leadership bolstered by staff flexibility appears key, if elusive. At their worst, the effective schools writings do not distinguish between the earmarks and the determinants of a good school. This leads facile imitators to adopt superficial solutions.

Teachers in effective schools focus on raising student achievement rather than on discipline or paperwork. This scenario indeed did describe some of the best classes the four ethonographers observed, but it seemed to require an exceptional senior teacher who could provide a strong classroom structure at the beginning of the school year and count on an harmonious, cooperative classroom situation from then on. There was also an appallingly high level of staff transfer from some of the problem schools; this made such an atmosphere impossible to achieve. As the effective schools literature itself concedes, it is difficult to codify the formula for impressing order.

Finally, a preoccupation with standardized test scores may create a new underclass of "basic skills" schools which produce moderately succesful test-takers who are, however, still unmotivated for secondary school or the conventional economy (Olson 1986:13, 16). Glenn, in her 1985 appraisal of the preoccupation with in-school factors, makes a case for continuing the expansive, liberal arts-style education for minority youth because it is the only form that teaches students to learn *how to learn*, and thus makes them adaptable to what will continue for the rest of this century to be a radically changing job market.

In a different light, Glenn (1981) in an earlier article, saw the limited goals of effective schools as a benefit: "...advocates and the poor can begin to de-emphasize the myth that schooling can be all things to all people, for one characteristic of effective schools is their singular focus on providing basic skills and knowledge. Effective schools make no attempt to solve community problems, indict poor parents as encouragers of pathology or 'fix' the children who come to the school. This singular focus means that poor parents can trust the schools" (pg. 146).

Not many studies have looked at schools over a long enough time frame to evaluate how deep the effectiveness really is, and have not looked in enough "microethnographic" detail at how the "high expectations" of staff are actually communicated to students; enthusiasm is hard to describe. This study, however, in attempting to address the longitudinal dimension, has asked detailed questions about management

style, has tried to describe effective high school teaching styles, and is a large-scale effort at investigating the applicability of effective schools theory to s dary schools.

In broad terms, the effective schools approach looks more at "transactional" or interpersonal and organizational relationships rather than at the "structural" features (i.e., race and class) that characterize the whole society and give shape to the specific transactions that occur at school. The present study, then, has sought to control for those larger, outside factors by selecting pairs of schools with different internal relations but roughly similar external socio-economic backdrops; it focuses on the relationships among students, teachers, and administration, with a longitudinal look at aggregate statistics and a summary of school programs. Ogbu (1981:6ff) points out a parallel tension in school ethnography: its "dual heritage" in culture and personality studies and what he refers to as "the service orientation of intervention research, as well as from the patronage of our ethnographic products by particular funding agencies and by educators." The former influence has stressed the way families and teachers, rather than whole societies, inculcate children with social patterns while the latter focuses on short-range, pragmatic solutions to institutional problems.

As noted above, for high school students, motivation is a more complex issue coupled with the choice of "survival strategies." In this regard, the elementary school principal's strict supervision of student conduct, including a dress code which approximates middle class norms, may not be feasible or even constructive at the secondary level. Moreover, the admirable "co-parenting" idea described by Gregory and Muller (1979) needs careful rethinking for inner city high school students, some of whom are themselves parents. The observations and interviews from this study did show, however, that students crave support and recognition from teachers but can and do seek that recognition from gangs as well. This underscores the recognized need for individual interactions in learning and other forms of "active classroom instruction" geared to the students' understanding, as the present study found.

COMMON EXPERIENCES OF CHICAGO PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOLS

Most of this report will concern differences among the eight high schools in the sample. The four ethnographers, however, were struck by a set of similar conditions and experiences shared by students and teachers at all of the schools. This section focuses on those common features with an emphasis on ones that might be pertinent to droppinmg out of school. These elements include: the organization of the school day (instructional time and course schedules), the student experience (in the classroom, tardiness and cutting, individual attention and gangs), and common teacher characteristics (length of tenure, burnout, perceptions of students). The more striking uniformities included the following.

First, most students (77% of those in general high schools) were receiving 240 minutes a day, or less, of active instruction (six periods or less, excluding study halls). Very few students spent more than 280 minutes (seven 40 minute periods) in instructional classrooms. This was true in all of the eight sample schools despite state law requiring 300 instructional minutes a day for secondary school students.

Second, among students in all of the sample schools, there was a widespread "culture of cutting." Students would selectively cut some of their classes, most often those early in the morning, at the end of the day or those which they did not like.

Third, students received very little individual attention, primarily due to the large class size (average enrollment of 28 to 30 students compared with a state average of 20.3) and the large number of students assigned to each guidance counselor (up to 600).

The basic teaching approach is the same across all the schools. Question and answer discussions and individual supervision of students were the predominant forms. The ethnographers observed numerous very skilled and dedicated teachers. However, the range of teachers and methods used was much greater within each school than between any set of schools. There was a difference among schools in the amount of classroom time teachers spent in various methods of teaching and interacting with students.

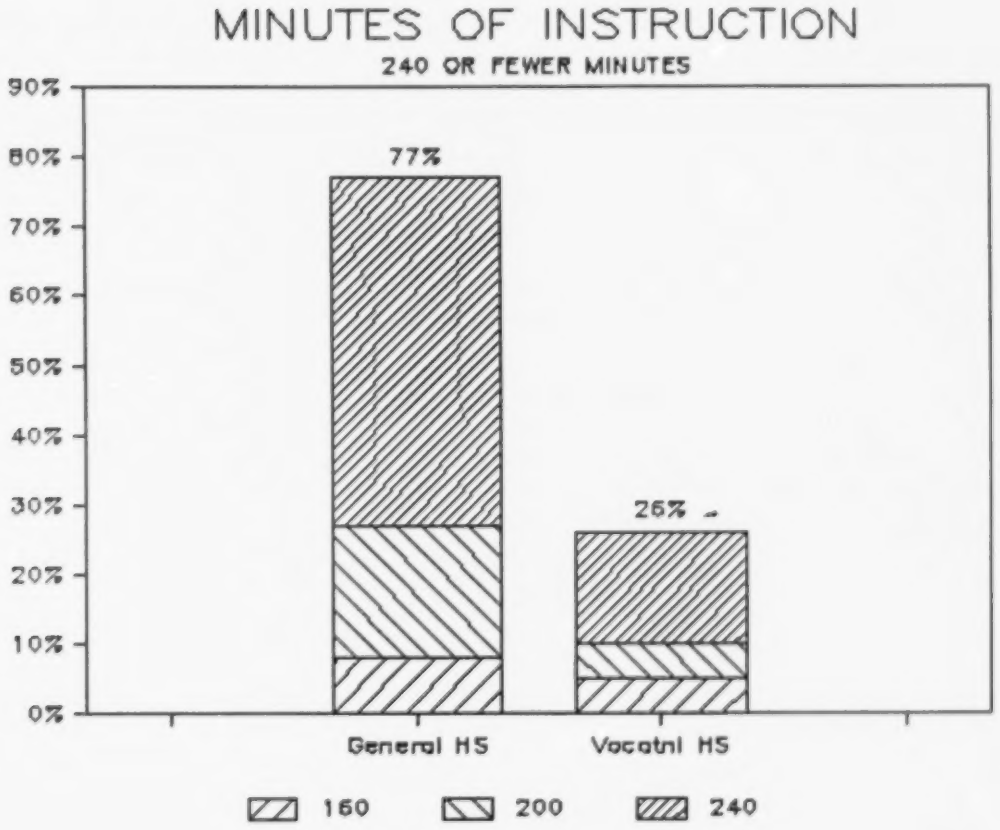
Finally, many teachers complained of "burnout" or of great frustration with the system. Those who had been teaching 10 years or more (the majority) were most demoralized. Teachers attributed this burnout to a lack of support from the Board and school administrators and to a perceived decline in student perparation and motivation, particularly in the past five or six years.

I. ORGANIZATION OF THE SCHOOL DAY

State law requires that students must have earned a minimum of 18 credits (16 in academic or vocational courses and four physical education courses worth one half credit each) in order to graduate.

The state also requires that students receive five clock-hours (300 minutes) of instruction a day. This second requirement is not adequately met in Chicago public high schools. In all of the sample high schools, class periods lasted 40 minutes followed by four minutes of passing time. Although some students took seven or even eight periods of course work, more than three quarters (77%) of the students interviewed at the general high schools were enrolled in six or fewer courses including Physical Education, and were assigned one or two study halls and a lunch period (see Table 3). Study halls, but not lunch periods, can be counted as part of the required 300 minutes of instruction. Usually, a student who was taking six courses was receiving 240 minutes of actual instruction time a day (including P.E.) plus an additional 40 minutes in study hall. One taking five courses was getting only 200 minutes of course instruction, but might be assigned two study halls. By comparison, most students (75%) in the vocational high schools were scheduled for seven or more periods. (See Figure 2.)

Figure 2



Thus, in order to insure that students were in school the required 300 minutes, they were generally assigned one or two additional study halls a day. Students were often given a fictional study hall as either their first or last class of the day. Often these study halls were assigned to non-existant rooms; students were not expected to attend these fictional studies. (The ethnographer, searching for students to be interviewed at DuSable, spent three days asking "Where is Room 185?" before he discovered there was no such room in use.) One school reported 700 students scheduled for a non-existant afternoon study hall. According to state officials, these fictional study halls are in violation of the law and endanger the school's recognition and qualification for state aid. A number of students at another school had two study halls back to back in the afternoon. Such scheduling encouraged students to leave the school during these periods; frequently, they did not return for later classes.

Table 3

NUMBERS OF COURSES TAKEN BY STUDENTS INTERVIEWED IN EIGHT PAIRED SCHOOLS

No. Courses*	Instruct. Time	Percent Students General High Schools	Percent Students Vocational High Schools
4	160	8%	5%
5	200	19%	5%
6	240	50%	16%
7	280	21%	63%
8	320	1%	12%
N=162		100%	100%

*Study halls not counted as courses.

Students in the two vocational schools took the academic subjects required for graduation plus two periods of shop or vocational subjects in their freshman or sophomore years. As juniors and seniors they took either a four period shop major or a variety of other vocational or business courses depending on the major. Vocational students, thus, generally took seven or eight periods of classes a day (including P.E.) and received 280 to 320 minutes of instructional time. They fared better than students in the general high schools as far as instructional time. Seventy-five percent of the students interviewed were taking seven or more periods of course work a day, compared to only 22% of the general high school students. At Simeon Vocational, many students were also assigned a study hall. Westinghouse did not have study halls, but students were assigned a "library" period at the beginning or end of the day. They were not expected to attend school during those periods, although the library

was open in the morning for those who wished to come. For students with less than 300 scheduled minutes, such unattended library periods also violate state requirements.

At every school, there was a ten minute division period after either second or fourth period. During this time students reported to their division teachers for attendance and announcements. In most cases, students were supposed to remain with the same division teacher throughout high school. When this system worked, teachers got to know their division students quite well since division provided an opportunity to talk with them and counsel them informally. In most schools, division teachers reported that they called the homes of absent students. Some teachers reported developing a working relationship, even friendship, with families of their division students. This system did not work as well in the schools with the highest dropout rates where divisions were frequently consolidated due to the loss of students. In such schools, students might get shuffled to new division teachers a number of times during their high school careers.

Below are a few representative student schedules from several schools.

A. 1. Study Hall
2. P.E.
Division
3. Computers
4. English
5. Law
6. Lunch
7. Study (MWF); Biology lab (TT)
8. Biology
9. Study Hall

Total course time: 200 or 240 minutes (depending on lab day), with 80 to 120 minutes of Study Hall. However, such a student would not be expected to be in school either first or ninth period, reducing his school day to 240 minutes.

B. 1. Piano
2. English Literature
Division
3. Study Hall
4. Spanish
5. Lunch
6. Geography
7. P.E.
8. Accounting
9. Study Hall

Total course time: 240 minutes a day plus 80 minutes of Study Hall; not expected to attend ninth period, reducing day to 280 minutes.

C. 1. Biology
2. Biology Lab (two days a week, three days - study)
Division
3. U.S. Government
4. Typing
5. Lunch
6. Reading Workshop (non-credit)
7. P.E.
8. Spanish
9. Art

Total course time: 280 or 320 minutes a day; 320 minute school day.

D. 1. Library
2. English
3. Shop
4. Shop
Division
5. Lunch
6. P.E.
7. Algebra
8. History

Total course time: 240 minutes a day; not expected to attend Library; school day of 240 minutes.

E. 1. Vocational Shop
2. Vocational Shop
3. Vocational Shop
4. Vocational Shop
Division
5. History
6. Lunch
7. P.E.
8. Study Hall
9. English

Total course time: 280 minutes per day; 320 minute school day if does not cut English.

While study halls could conceivably be a productive part of a student's day, allowing him or her time to complete assignments or work on homework, in reality they never were. All ethnographers found the study halls they observed to be noisy, crowded and frequently under the control of the students rather than the supervising teacher. In one study hall, students moved their desks in clusters to the back of the room where they talked throughout the period with friends. The study hall room was badly marked with graffiti on the desks and walls. In another school, study halls (three or four classes with their respective teachers) were held in the lunchroom before and after lunch periods. The noise level was at a constant din. The study halls held after lunch were particularly bad because there was food and trash on the floors, and tables were sticky with the spills from lunch. One ethnographer was constantly frustrated because none of the students she wanted to interview was ever in the assigned study hall. The teachers could only

show her their attendance books with students repeatedly marked absent for study hall. At best, under such conditions, study halls were "holding pens" where teachers and students waste time that could be better spent elsewhere; at worst, they were disruptive areas in the school where discipline was lacking and control of the room rested in student hands.

In summary, although students, except those in work study programs, were scheduled to be at school for eight or nine periods a day, most took only five to seven periods of course work (200 to 280 minutes a day). Their schedules were rounded out with a lunch period and one or more real or fictional study halls. Students in vocational schools fared better than students in general high schools. Seventy-five percent of vocational students were in class seven or more periods a day (at least 280 minutes a day). Only 22% of the general high school students in the sample had 280 or more minutes of instructional time a day. Wells Academy was better than the other sample high schools in this respect. No student was taking less than six courses, and 40% were enrolled in seven or more classes a day. Some of these periods were tutoring sessions.

Such lax scheduling, along with restrictions on the number of courses students are allowed to take, dramatically shortchanges Chicago high school students. Further, this scheduling communicates to students that school is not a serious enterprise, that their time is not important, and that they do not have to be present when they are scheduled to be. Such training will not make graduates responsible citizens or desired employees.

II. THE STUDENT EXPERIENCE

A. IN THE CLASSROOM

Three sample classroom observations from one of the sample schools have been included to give an idea of what actually goes on in high school classrooms. Three from the same school were purposefully chosen to illustrate the range of teaching methods and skills that the ethnographers found in each school. Although, there were differences among schools in the amount of time devoted to interactive teaching or to question and answer discussion or to individual supervision, the overall range of methods and teacher quality was greater within each school than between any two schools. Note that in this school most teachers had their own classrooms.

1. Ms. H: Regular Senior English

Ms. H's classroom was neat and orderly; no graffiti was in evidence. A shelf partly filled with books ran along one side of the classroom beneath the windows. On the other side of the classroom posters with punctuation marks decorated the wall. The bulletin board was covered with student work against a background of construction paper. The new desks were lined up in rows. The teacher's desk was at the front; the chalkboard was mounted on the wall behind.

At the beginning of class Ms. H took attendance silently. One student came in late bearing a note. There were no other tardy students. Ms. H later stated that she was very strict about tardiness and late work assignments. After roll was taken, Ms. H read out four true-false questions, a quick quiz to make sure students were keeping up with their reading. They exchanged papers, graded them, signed their names at the bottom, and passed them to the front. This took five minutes of class time.

Ms. H then launched immediately into the main lesson, a question and answer discussion about several chapters in a novel the class was reading. She then asked a series of questions on a more abstract level, so well prepared that they appeared spontaneous, about the motivations of the characters and the meaning and significance of various actions. She either called on individual students or indicated that the entire class could call out the answer. Students were extremely attentive; there was no extraneous talking. (The ethnographer, too, was engrossed.)

Ms. H's attitude toward her students was one of respect and genuine concern for their thoughts and answers. Her expectations for their performance appeared to be high, and the students reacted to the class with enthusiasm. About 25 minutes of class time was spent in the discussion; the quiz had occupied five minutes; in the final five minutes, the next assignment was given. Altogether 35 minutes of class time (88%) was devoted to the subject matter.

2. Ms. T: Regular Freshman English

Ms. T's room was sparsely decorated and equipped. The bulletin boards were covered with yellow and white construction paper; about one third of the bulletin board at the back of the room was devoted to student papers. A long, mostly empty, book cabinet stood beneath the windows at one side of the classroom. Desks were arranged in rows; the teacher's desk was at the front of the classroom in front of the chalkboard.

Ms. T took attendance silently as students entered; 20 were present; five or six were marked absent. When the bell rang, she closed the doors for a few minutes; only one student was tardy, and he was admitted about ten minutes after the bell with a note. The assignment, written on the board, was to write a three paragraph essay on one of five topics listed on the board. Ms. T explained the task briefly. One student asked if he could work on homework for another class if he had finished his draft; initially the teacher said "yes" because she had misunderstood his question. When he began doing his homework, she asked him to work on his essay only.

Ms. T took a firm, no nonsense approach; students got right down to work with little fooling around. By ten minutes into the period all were writing. The teacher sat at her desk while students came up to have her look over their paragraphs. This was the second day

of this assignment; students were either completing their essays or copying over the rough draft. As they completed the drafts, they brought them up to Ms. T to read.

At one point a parent came up to the room. Ms. T stepped outside for three or four minutes to confer with the parent. The students remained seated, quietly writing.

By the last ten minutes of the class, however, after having spent the previous 20 minutes writing, students began to tire of the assignment. Most grew restless, stopped work, looked around or whispered quietly among themselves. In response to the rising noise level, Ms. T said, "Class, I hear talking; that must mean some of you have finished; if so, you should be proofreading." During 30 minutes of the 40 minute period, the majority of students worked on the assigned essay. After class, Ms. T remarked that she had been using this method of teaching increasingly; she said her freshmen seemed to settle down more quickly and do more work if she gave them written assignments to do in class.

3. Mr. S: Regular Sophomore Algebra and Trigonometry

Mr. S's class was located in one of the smaller classrooms in the building. The room appeared to have been divided into two classrooms by a sound proof panel at the back of the room. Covered with ripped vinyl, this panel had been decorated with graffiti. Graffiti also covered the desk tops. Otherwise the room was clean and neat. Because it had been divided, the room was wider than it was long. The teacher's desk was on one side of the room, in front of a small chalkboard. The desks were lined up on the other side of the room, in front of the larger chalkboard. Two small bulletin boards covered with construction paper displayed a few student papers.

When the ethnographer entered the classroom, Mr. S was at the board helping a girl from his previous class. She was perched on a desk top working out a problem on the board. Students entered the room talking and joking loudly. Some called out "hello" to Mr. S using an affectionate nickname to address him (which he encouraged by addressing students by the reciprocal instead of by their names). After the bell rang and for about five minutes into the period, Mr. S continued helping the girl from his previous class. Subsequently she sat at his desk to the side and continued working.

Meanwhile the classroom became increasingly chaotic. Students walked around freely and talked loudly, calling out jokes and wisecracks to one another. One student sat down with the ethnographer and began haranguing her about what she was doing there and telling her what was wrong with the school and the students. Actually he was repeating and reordering and restringing together a set of phrases in the "preacher" style of talking. Interestingly enough, the teacher later resorted to this same oral style to quiet the class.

When Mr. S had finished helping the girl, he asked how many students had not yet taken a test he had given earlier in the week. He gave out five tests, including two to students who had come into the room late, telling them to take the test quickly before the lesson began. They finished in five to eight minutes.

Meanwhile, Mr. S was trying to call the class to order. Students openly mocked and laughed at him. He kept making threats which he did not carry out. One boy put his jacket over his head. Mr. S told him to leave the room; the boy sat defiantly in his seat. After two or three orders to leave, Mr. S let him alone. Then he called on students in the back chairs to move up closer and fill empty desks near the front. He asked two, who initially refused, to comply or leave; they refused to leave the room, but finally moved up. During the first 15 minutes of class, eight students came in tardy. Three entered about five minutes after the bell; three were ten to 15 minutes late; another two were brought in by a hall monitor who had found them trying to cut class. Mr. S allowed all to come in and even gave two of the late comers the test to make up. Fifteen minutes into the period Mr. S took attendance (nineteen were present, six absent.)

Twenty minutes into the period Mr. S called for order. The students continued talking and mocking his increasing anger. At last Mr. S appeared to work up to a real rage. He began pacing back and forth in front of the class intoning threats in the manner of a "fire and brimstone" preacher, stringing together and recombining key phrases. He ended with the ultimate threat of lowering grades (which did not become final for another two weeks). When he stopped there was complete silence as if this performance was what the class had been waiting for, indeed egging him into.

During the next ten minutes Mr. S. went over four equations as he wrote the solutions on the board. He asked questions concerning factoring, and students called out the answers. When the equations had been solved, he wrote four more on the board for students to do as homework. The test the next day, he explained, would contain similar problems. During the final ten minutes of class, talking again broke out; Mr. S conversed informally with students. No one began working on the homework problems. A total of ten minutes of class time (25%) had been spent in actual instruction.

At the end Mr. S, appearing somewhat embarrassed, explained to the ethnographer that this was his worst class. He said "You saw it just as it was; we didn't do anything different." The students, while openly disrespectful, also appeared to be genuinely fond of Mr. S. One student interviewed even listed him as his best teacher. Most students, however, appeared to treat his class as a joke.

B. ATTENDANCE: THE "CULTURE OF CUTTING"

In every school, the ethnographers found among students a shared "culture of cutting," that is, an attitude that it was not a serious offense to skip out on a class once in a while or even frequently. "Everybody does it," students repeatedly stated in interview. (Ethnographers were primarily meeting better attending students; chronic truants were not very accessible to school-based observers.) Part of the "culture of cutting" is a selective attendance of classes, "smorgasbord cutting." Students generally cut the hardest or least liked classes. Early morning classes and those at the end of the day were less frequently attended. Frequent cutters often checked into Division and a few classes in the middle of the day, skipping the rest.

Teachers in every school cited cutting (and attendance) as a problem. Although the incidence of cutting did vary somewhat among schools, there was no consistent pattern of it between paired higher or lower dropout schools. Some schools had more severe penalties, but even in those where students were barred from class after a certain number of cuts, and parents were called in, or where repeated cutting earned temporary suspension from school, these policies appeared to have little effect on the overall rate of cuting or on the chronic cutter. In fact, most such punishments merely gave official sanction to the very action being punished: not attending class.

When asked if they had ever cut class, more than half the students admitted cutting. Ironically, the schools where fewest students admitted to cutting, the ethnographers noted the largest numbers of students in the halls during class time. Reasons students gave for cutting class included: tiredness at the end of the day, not being prepared for class, or needing to go home early for some personal errand or business. Some admitted they just did not feel like going to class. Asked why they thought other students cut, the majority replied "to hang out with their friends," or "because they don't feel like going." At all of the schools, students reported there were places where they could hide while cutting -- stairwells, the lunchroom, the social room, the halls, the gym, even the discipline room. In several of the schools, students left and re-entered at will through doors locked on the outside but unguarded on the inside. Returning students simply banged on the doors until a passing student opened them.

Tardiness, a problem related to cutting, was found to varying degrees at all schools. In the school where tardiness was most tightly controlled, students literally ran for their classrooms when the bell rang. At that school, teachers could lock tardy students out and were supossed to write up tardy slips on students. At schools where rules concerning tardiness were most laxly enforced, groups of students congregated in the halls for ten or 15 minutes, or more, after the bell had rung. They would saunter late into those classes in which the teachers did not enforce rules for tardiness. Effectively, these students were reducing their classroom exposure by 25% to 38%. Sometimes the line between tardiness and cutting was quite fine.

The end result of cutting, particularly if it is more than occasional, is that the student falls behind. Since one of the reasons students frequently cited for cutting was that they were not prepared for the class, cutting became a cycle of falling behind, skipping class because of uncompleted work, and consequently falling farther behind. Frequently, the end result was that the student failed the class for non-attendance. Many teachers reported that a large percentage of their failures were attendance related. Multiple failures was one of the reasons cited by both teachers and students for students dropping out. One ethnographer saw a pattern in cutting, failures and the level of the class. Students in Honors classes cut and failed less than students in Regular level level classes. Students in Basic and Essential classes had higher rates of both cutting and failures than those in Regular classes. Another ethnographer noted that teachers eventually fell in with the "culture of cutting." She noted that at the beginning of the year teachers reported they had been poised to solve the cutting issue; new policies were made and approved. Gradually, as students began to test them, the enforcement of the rules disintegrated. By spring the students were observed to be in control of their class attendance, expecially after Division. The end result was that teachers resorted to failing students for lack of attendance.

In summary, students at all the schools selectively cut class. Cutting and tardiness were better controlled at some schools than others. All schools had rules and policies on the books which were designed to curb cutting and tardiness. In most, a student could be marked with a cut after a certain number of tardy slips. Students who cut repeatedly could be sent to in-house suspension, detention or even suspended from school for a few days. A student with a certain number of cuts could be barred from class until a parent conference was held. All such punishments give official sanction to missing classes, the aim of cutting in the first place. With the exception of detention, such punishments are simply "sanctioned cutting."

However, those schools where cutting was most effectively limited apeared to be those in which the administration was firmest in insisting that teachers and aides conscientiously fulfill hall monitoring duties, that teachers report class cutters to the attendance office or to the counselors, and that teachers call the homes of students who cut class. Schools where policies on cutting and tardiness were most persistently and consistently applied appeared to be most successful in containing them.

C. ONE ON ONE: INDIVIDUAL ATTENTION FOR STUDENTS

The average student received very little individual attention each day. Even in a class where the teacher was supervising students individually, a student could not expect to get more than a minute or two of undivided attention in a class of 25 to 30 students. On an average day, a student received less than ten minutes of personal attention from teachers in his/her classes. Only if the student had cultivated a more personal and informal relationship with a teacher or

counselor, or had gotten in trouble, would he or she be likely to have any more individual attention from an adult at the school. One perceptive student stated that she had been having personal problems at one point and had begun cutting class in order to receive more adult attention. Only then did she get the attention she needed.

Teachers stressed the need of students for individual attention. In particular, those in schools with lower income students and the highest dropout rates, brought up this point in their comments. Many teachers felt they were called upon to "parent" as well as to teach students. While some resented this role, most said they enjoyed it. A number of teachers listed being parent, role model and "just treating students as human beings" as the most important things they did during a school day. One teacher said he patted students on the shoulder a lot because they seemed to need the attention and enjoy the contact. Another stated that, in her division, four or five students would always sit on a ledge near her as though they needed the physical closeness.

Students reciprocated teacher opinions in answer to questions concerning their favorite and least favorite classes. It was striking that in the four schools which were high on the dropout scale (DuSable, Collins, Wells and Bowen) students almost unanimously replied that it was the teacher, not the subject matter, who determined whether a class was "best" or "worst." Students in the four schools with fewer dropouts were more likely to answer that it was the subject, difficulty, or degree of interest that made a course most or least liked.

One of the frequently voiced teacher complaints was that classes contained too many students. At the same time they felt students were entering school less prepared and in greater need of individual attention. The elimination of Basic and Essential level courses was commonly criticized. Several teachers pointed out that not only had putting all students into Regular level classes made it harder for those without the necessary skills, but that those students also received less individual attention. Under the old regulations Basic and Essential classes were permitted a maximum of 25 students instead of 28.

Students also had only a limited amount of time with counselors and other staff unless they were in Special Education or another special program. Most schools in the sample had four or five counselors for 1,000 to 2,000 students. Counselors were expected to help students plan their programs, apply for college or other training programs, and counsel those with problems. In addition, they were often expected to help with attendance and discipline problems, call parents for conferences, and other perform non-interactive tasks. Consequently a number of students in the interview sample had not met with their counselor during the entire year. Counselors complained that the ordinary, quiet student often got lost in the shuffle.

More individual counseling for those students with multiple failures, attendance and discipline problems was often recommended when staff were asked what could be done to reduce the dropout rate. Early intervention, with more individual attention at the first sign of a problem, was stressed.

D. GANGS: THE COMPETITION

The majority of students interviewed reported that gang members attended their schools. Although some complained that recruitment went on in the lunchroom or that gang members initiated fights and shoving matches just outside the school doors, many took an attitude of "if you don't bother them, they won't bother you in the school." However, in the four schools on the higher end of the dropout scale (DuSable, Collins, Wells and Bowen), gangs appeared to have a much stronger influence among students. Both teachers and students at these schools felt that involvement with gangs was a major "reason" for students dropping out of school.

While the area outside the building at these higher dropout schools was often under the control of gangs, at only one school (DuSable) did students and teachers complain of gang violence and open disruption of the school's operation. At DuSable, where outsiders gained entrance easily and roamed the halls, the third floor was described as under the control of gangs. But at six of the eight sites, students rated their schools as "very safe" to "moderately safe." In all four of the schools on the low end of the dropout scale (Hubbard, Washington, Westinghouse and Simeon), students and teachers deemed the inside of the buildings to be very safe.

Remarkably, teachers at <u>all</u> schools, regardless of the perceived safety, felt the students at their own school were "basically good kids" or "the quiet, sweet ones." They were contrasted to students at "really tough schools" elsewhere. The long tenure of teachers at most schools could attest to the fact that the schools were generally perceived as internally safe.

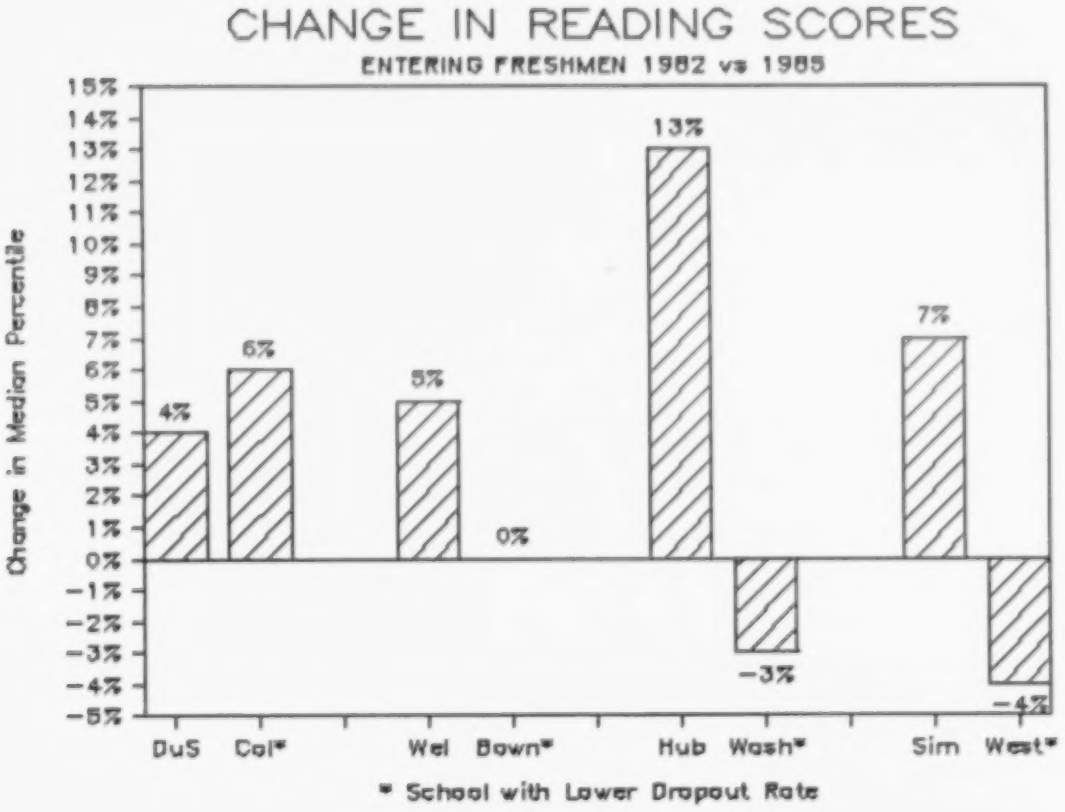
To combat gang problems, schools had policies prohibiting the display of gang symbols and the wearing of gang colors in the building. Students wearing gang colors were sometimes sent home to change; hats, earrings and other gang symbols, if worn at school, were sometimes confiscated. Nevertheless, there was gang graffiti at most schools. The ethnographers noted students drawing gang symbols or wearing gang emblems, evidence, albeit usually quiet, of a gang presence in the schools. The sample schools, with some exceptions, did seem to provide a haven for students from the more violent forms of gang activity.

III. TEACHER SIMILIARITIES AMONG THE SCHOOLS

A long average tenure was a common factor among the faculties at most of the schools. The average teacher had taught the last ten years in the same school. Collins and Hubbard, which both recently experienced rapid faculty turnover, were the exceptions. Many teachers entered the Chicago Public School System in the 1960s and early 1970s. After a few initial moves, most settled into their current school and are still teaching there. This longevity may have contributed to a uniformity among teachers in their perceptions of students and their frustrations with the system.

Most teachers taught five periods, had two periods of free time for preparation or "counseling and guidance," one period for lunch and one period for hall monitoring, lunchroom or some other duty. Shop teachers taught six periods. Many teachers felt they were overburdened with paperwork, such as filling out cut slips. They were particularly upset when they could see no concrete results from the paperwork. In most schools, teachers believed the administration could provide them with more support, such as phones to use to call parents, the reduction of unnecessary paperwork, and more support in enforcing school policies on discipline, cutting, and tardiness.

Figure 3



The second major source of faculty frustration was a perceived decline in student preparation and motivation, particularly in the past five or six years. Although teachers at all of the schools except Simeon mentioned a decline in student interest and ability to do the work as contributing to lowered teacher morale, TAP scores for the years 1982-1895 indicate that at five of the eight schools, there has been, in fact, some improvement in ninth grade reading scores. (See Figure 3). In two of the schools (both schools with the lower dropout rate in a pair) student scores did decline slightly in reading and math. (See Table 4.)

Table 4

CHANGES IN NINTH GRADE TAP SCORES

Reading

Year	DuSable 58%*	Collins 48%	Wells 56%	Bowen 42%	Hubbard 40%	Wash'ton 24%	Simeon 34%	West'hse 22%
1982	14	16	18	23	27	40	33	31
1983	16	18	21	19	33	42	35	33
1984	18.5	14	21	21	29	37	33	29
1985	18	22	23	23	40	37	40	27

*1982 Dropout Rate

Math

Year	DuSable	Collins	Wells	Bowen	Hubbard	Wash'ton	Simeon	West'hse
1982	12	19	21	19	25	35	28	32
1983	12	16	19	19	28	39	28	32
1984	16	16	21	21	32	35	32	28
1985	16	19	21	25	32	32	35	28

Teachers offered many explanations for this perceived decline in student motivation and preparation: the pervasiveness of television and the "video mentality," increasing numbers of students from one-parent families, lack of adult role models, declining preparation in elementary school, lack of employment opportunities for graduates, and so on. Many teachers maintained that the "increasing" lack of responsiveness of students was a major source of teacher "burnout." As several expressed it, teachers had to put more energy into teaching, but remain satisfied

with fewer results and rewards. Teachers pay have been responding more to perceptions of motivational changes in students than to their ability to do the work since they attributed their feelings of apathy and burnout to the frustration of being unable to reach a group of students substantially different from their predecessors, in that the present students saw no purpose in education and showed little interest in learning.

Many teachers said they would leave teaching if they had an opportunity to do something else. But as one said, "by the time you are in your thirties and have children of your own to support, what else can you do? It's a paycheck." A number reported holding second jobs and indicated they would leave teaching entirely if they could support themselves with those jobs.

COMPARISON OF THE FOUR PAIRS OF SCHOOLS

At the outset of the study it was anticipated that some differences across would be found between the school with the higher dropout rate and that with the lower dropout rate across all four pairs of schools. Certain characteristics mentioned in the literature on effective schools were expected to differentiate the schools with the lower dropout rate in each pair. Although differences were found, the overall findings were less clear cut than had been anticipated initially. Several complexities and problems in comparison account for the difficulty in drawing firm conclusions.

First, the schools were not perfectly paired. The external differences may be as significant to the dropout rate as the in-school practices. For example, the poverty rate of students at DuSable was 12% higher than that at Collins paralleling the 11.2% higher dropout rate at DuSable.

Second, there have been recent changes in the administrations at three of the eight schools. The present principal at Collins has been there only since the fall of 1985. The principal at Hubbard was appointed in the spring of 1984, and the principal at Westinghouse assumed his job in the fall of 1982. Other changes in the schools have also occurred since 1982. For example, the dropout rate at Westinghouse increased by almost five percentage points between 1982 and 1984. At the same time, the dropout rate at Simeon declined by one percent, bringing the two schools in the pair closer together. Therefore, present practices and answers to the questionnaires can not be assumed to reflect perfectly conditions in 1978-84. This data, however, should be useful in analyzing future dropout figures.

Third, as the study progressed, all ethnographers found their perceptions of the schools changed. Initial impressions were modified. Differences seemed less clear and the situation more complex. There are at least two possible explanations for this change. The first is that the longer the time the ethnographer was in the schools, the more his or her understanding grew of the complexities of the high school organization. Alternatively, the reason differences may have appeared less clear by the end of the study is ethnographer bias or subjectivity. By the end of the study three of the ethnographers perceived the school with the higher dropout rate more favorably than they had at the beginning of the study. In two cases the ethnographer also felt less positive at the end towards the school which created the better initial impression.

Despite the imperfections and complexities of the pairings, six clear differences emerged which distinguished the high from the low dropout school in most pairs. *These six factors include the leadership of the principal, the degree of order and discipline in the school, school attendance rates, failure rates, the amount of time teachers engaged in actual instruction, and the percent of teaching time spent in interactive teaching.* Each of these differences was found in at least three out of four paired schools.

Two other factors, while less clearly demonstated, were found by more than one of the ethnographers to be a difference between schools in some pairs. First, in two pairs the condition and maintenance of the physical plant appeared to make some difference. In both of these pairs the schools with the lower dropout rates were housed in the superior and better maintained building. Second, in some of the pairs more political dissension existed between the faculty and administration in the lower dropout school. On the other hand, there was also some indication that the faculty in these schools tended to feel a greater sense of community with the school and students.

I. LEADERSHIP OF THE PRINCIPAL

The ethnographers judged the principals at the schools with the lower dropout rates to be stronger overall leaders. Evidence from the study suggests that the type of leadership role the principal assumes may affect the dropout rate in several ways. First, the principal who strongly enforces student and teacher discipline insures a more orderly and disciplined atmosphere in the school. This aspect of an effective school is almost always noted by researchers. The four pairs of schools, with one exception, confirmed this finding. Second, and closely related, the effective principal holds and communicates clearly a set of expectations to students and teachers. Third, on a more philosophical level, the present study found that the principals in the lower dropout schools tended to have a clearer vision or ideology for the school. Finally, the principal of the lower dropout school in each pair generally used staff more effectively and often had a more authoritarian style of management. Figure 4 shows the precentage of teachers' responses at each school which characterized the principal as "maintaining control in own hands" or "soliciting staff opinions but ultimately making the decisions."

Figure 4

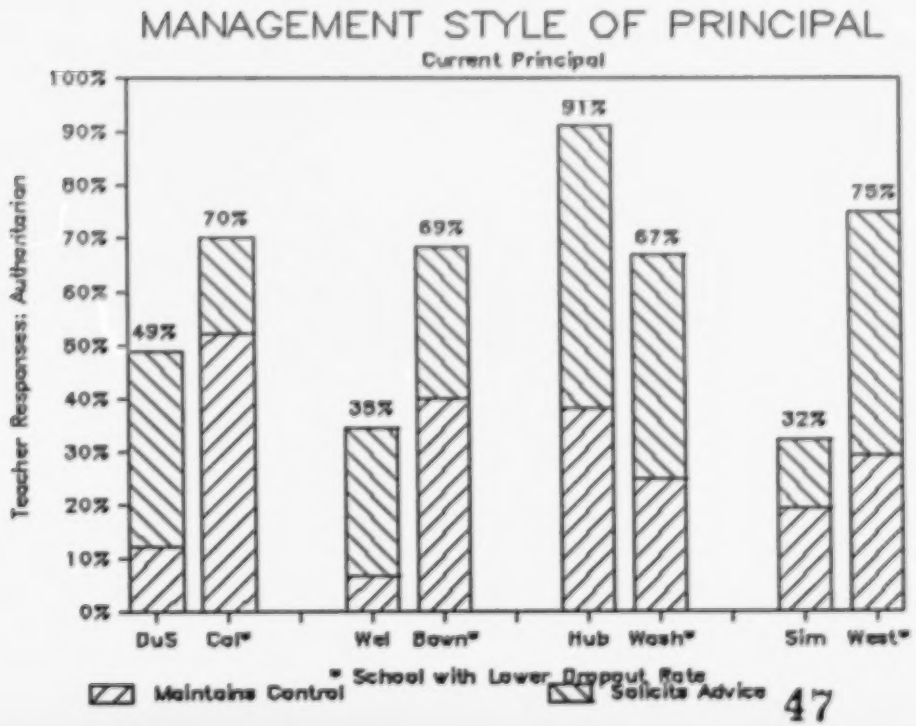


Table 5 indicates how interviewed teachers perceived their principal's management style. Teachers were asked to characterize the principal's style of management as one or more of the following: democratic, team player, maintains control in own hands, top down decision maker, solicits opinions but makes own decisions, and delegates responsibility. Responses for two sets of categories were combined: democratic-team player and maintains control-top down. A Chi-Square test of significance confirmed that in three of the four pairs of schools, teachers in each pair viewed their principals as having different management styles. Teachers at the school in each pair with the lower dropout rate were more likely to characterize the principal as ultimately maintaining control in his own hands. For example, most teachers at Collins perceived their principal as someone who maintains control in his own hands, while those at DuSable saw the principal as being a "team player." There was no significant difference in teacher perceptions at Hubbard and Washington.

Table 5

MANAGEMENT STYLE OF PRINCIPAL: TEACHER PERCEPTIONS

PERCENT TEACHER RESPONSES AT EACH SCHOOL

Management Style of Principal	DuSable (58%)*	Collins (48%)	Wells (56%)	Bowen (48%)	Hubbard (40%)	Washington (24%)	Simeon (34%)	Westinghouse (22%)
Maintains # control in own hands	12.2%	52.5%	6.9%	39.3%	38.2%	25.0%	19.4%	29.2%
Solicits opinions but makes own decisions	36.6%	13.0%	27.6%	28.6%	52.9%	41.7%	12.9%	45.8%
Delegates responsibility	22.0%	21.3%	20.7%	10.7%	5.9%	20.8%	48.4%	8.3%
Democratic	29.3%	8.2%	13.8%	10.7%	2.9%	12.5%	0.0%	0.0%
Other	0.0%	0.0%	31.0%	10.7%	0.0%	0.0%	19.4%	16.7%
Total Responses	41	61	29	28	34	24	31	24
Total teachers interviewed	20	20	21	21	20	20	20	20

* 1982 Dropout Rate

Responses listed in descending order from most authoritarian to most democratic

The former principal at Collins appeared to have assumed a stronger, more controversial, leadership role (especially during the initial period of his administration) than the principal at DuSable who was more a mediator and facilitator. The principals at Bowen and Washington were also judged to have been more effective administators than their counterparts at Wells and Hubbard during the period 1978-84. The picture is less clear for Westinghouse and Simeon. Although the present pricipal at Westinghouse has been there since 1982 and clearly provides the school with strong leadership, his predecessor was characterized by most interviewees as a laissez-faire principal under whom teachers and students remained largely unsupervised. The principal at Simeon, while delegating many of the everyday details of running the school to others, clearly did not allow students or teachers this kind of autonomy.

The evidence to support these views comes from several sources: the ethnographer observations, questions from teacher interviews concerning the management style of, expectations of, and conflicts with the principal, and answers to questions on the administration interviews. It should be noted again that Collins, Hubbard and Westinghouse experienced changes in principals during or after the period of the previous dropout study (1978-84). In the following discussions of the pairs of schools, the present situation is contrasted with the past under the previous principal.

A. COLLINS AND DUSABLE

The principal at DuSable was viewed as a capable administrator involved in the day to day running of the school. She characterized herself as a mediator, and many of her staff agreed. The majority of teachers interviewed characterized her management style as "democratic" or as "soliciting the opinions of others yet making the final decision." About equal numbers of teachers found the principal at DuSable to be a moderate or lenient disciplinarian. Of 20 students interviewed, however, seven felt the principal was not strict enough while 13 believed discipline to be just right. While the principal was characterized as friendly, accessible and having a "familistic concern" for students, she did not set forth high goals or expectations for students and faculty. The ethnographer found that teachers characterized the principal as an effective facilitator of programs for whoever wants them, rather than as a forceful innovator (like her predcessor).

This was the first year for the new principal at Collins. He appeared to be a man of lofty ideals for the school, but too little time had elapsed to judge the effectiveness of the implementation of these ideals. In contrast to DuSable the majority of teachers at Collins felt the principal's management style could be characterized as "making his own decisions" or" handing decisions down from the top." At the same time, a majority of teachers also acknowledged that he delegated authority, for example, to the three assistant principals each of whom was in charge of the day to day supervision of one of the floors of the school. In general teachers found his administration to be aloof and somewhat lax on enforcing discipline. Of the 20 students interviewed, however, eight believed the principal to be too strict while 11 felt discipline under him was just right.

The previous principal who headed Collins during the 1978-84 period offered quite a contrast. He was viewed as a stern disciplinarian and directly involved in the day to day running of the school, including making visits to classrooms and maintaining visibility in the halls. In addition, he was characterized as being deeply committed to the community that the school served and having high aspirations for black students. From teacher and staff interviews at Collins, the ethnographer arrived at the impression that the former principal, while quite effective at the beginning of his term, was much less so at the end. When the school opened in 1976, the principal brought in a hand-picked staff sharing common ideals. As new teachers were transferred in during the early 1980s, racial tension increased and teacher morale dropped; the core faculty group sharing the original set of common ideals was eroded.

B. BOWEN AND WELLS

The principal at Wells was described by the ethnographer as an energetic man, highly visible in the school. He was particularly firm in handling the more serious cases of student misconduct. He was credited with steering the school from a chaotic, gang-controlled institution to a safer, more controlled environment. He was well liked by most of the teachers. Sixty percent of the faculty interviewed described their working relationhip with him as friendly and informal. One characterized him as "liking to be liked and liking to please." His management style appeared to be more complex and varied than that of any other principal in the study. Seven of the 20 teachers said that all of the management styles listed on the questionnaire characterized his decision making at various times. Five others checked all of the listed styles except "maintains control in own hands." The ethnographer observed that, while he had the cooperation of the majority of the staff, he did depend on his selected few to perform and execute his wishes.

In summary, the principal at Wells appeared to be very "people-oriented." Although he did not offer any guiding philosophy or goals for running the school, he stated that he liked working with people, especially the students. Likewise, while he felt he had improved relations between students and teachers, he did not hold the same high expectations for student performance and success as did Bowen's principal. On the other hand, he was taking a leading role in the recent renovation and upgrading of Wells Academy.

The ethnographer described Bowen's principal as a calm and patient man whose supervision of administrators was neither direct nor commanding. Because of the size of the school, he did delegate responsibility and expected those to whom authority was given to perform their duties without constant direction. However, he was personally involved in the management of the school and maintained a high visibility, particularly on the first floor of the school. The principal stated his guiding idea in running the school to be "a tradition of excellence and achievement." According to him, he strove to be as enthusiastic and energetic as possible and to give his "top performance at all times." In his interview the principal expressed strong expectations that students at Bowen would learn and succeed. He indicated that he tried to visit classrooms as often as possible and to pay each at least one formal visit a year. He reported

also looking over lesson plans. Ten of the teachers interviewed said that the principal had evaluated their teaching; four stated that no one had visited their classes. Only three reported that he had looked at their lesson plans this year; a number reported that in previous years he had examined lesson plans.

From teacher comments and questionnaire responses, the principal at Bowen appeared to be a strong administrator who maintained control of the school in his own hands. Fifty percent of Bowen's teachers described their working relationship with him as friendly but formal. Fifteen percent felt the working relationship was strained. Aproximately 40% of the responses describing his leadership style characterized it as "maintains control in his own hands" or "decisions made from the top down." (See Table 5). Another 30% felt he solicted staff opinions but made his own decisions. Although the principal described himself as having good rapport with his staff, a number of teachers at Bowen, citing several examples, reported that faculty members who disagreed with or challenged the administration on issues were subject to retribution or even dismissal.

C. WASHINGTON AND HUBBARD

The present principal of Hubbard, who has been at the school only since March of 1984, takes an active part in the day to day affairs of the school. He makes himself accessible to staff and parents and is often outside his office supervising the halls or visiting classes. He has set the following as three of his primary goals: 1) improving the academic offerings and reputation of the school, 2) unifying instruction in departments and assuming more control over teacher activities, and 3) tightening up student discipline. Most teachers characterized the principal as a strong, if not autocratic, leader. Eighteen of twenty teachers categorized his management style as "solicits staff opinions but makes his own decisions." Thirteen of these teachers felt that decisions were made from the top down or that the principal maintained control in his own hands. Only one felt he demonstrated a democratic style of management. All 20 teachers reported that he checked lesson plans (once a week) and examined grading and failure rates. Further evidence of his strong leadership role comes from teachers who reported major conflicts between the faculty and administration over such issues as failure rates, teacher duties and the enforced supervision of students. On the basis of findings from this study, it is anticipated that the dropout rate at Hubbard will decline under the leadership of this new principal.

Characterizations of the former principal at Hubbard present a marked contrast. He was judged by those at the school to have been a much less effective administrator. He was said to have spent most of his time in his office or standing outside the door and to have visited classes only rarely. He did not regularly collect lesson plans or check on teacher performance of duties. Neither did the former principal insist on any standardization of course materials or grades within departments. He was characterized as a very lenient disciplinarian who had not instituted any effective policies to curb cutting and tardiness. On the other hand, he was friendly and easy going, liked by both teachers and students.

The principal at Washington High School, the school in the pair with the lower dropout rate, was also an easy going and friendly man. However, he had used his position as leader to reach his goal of making the school a good general high school. He took a hand in supervising the everyday affairs of the school as well as disciplining teachers and dealing with parents. According to both the principal and teachers he checked lesson plans regularly once every five weeks and observed teachers at least once a year, more if he felt they were weak. His role in maintaining student discipline, however, was more relaxed. Although student opinion tended to view him as a disciplinarian (six out of 20 students believed he was too strict while 12 felt he was neither too strict nor too lenient), 13 out of 20 teachers interviewed said the principal was too lenient concerning student discipline. Another four felt he was inconsistent in carrying out discipline policies. He viewed himself as the court of last resort, having been forced into taking a more direct role after the loss of an assistant principal. Six teachers characterized the management style of the principal as making decisions alone, three felt he made them democratically, ten believed he solicited the opinions of others but ultimately made the decision while five thought he delegated responsibilities. Sixteen teachers said there had been major conflicts between the principal and faculty over such issues as support of teachers in discipline cases, the paperwork load, and the problem of student tardiness..

In summary, while the principal at Washington was not judged as exerting quite as strong leadership and control, particularly in the area of student discipline, as the new principal at Hubbard, he did appear to have offered Washington more effective leadership than that which was offered by the former principal at Hubbard.

D. WESTINGHOUSE AND SIMEON

The principal at Simeon High School appeared to lead the school in an easy, relaxed fashion. Although he delegated many of the details of day to day school supervision to assistant principals and the offices of discipline, programming, counseling and attendance, his office door was always open and he conferred regularly with those to whom responsibilities had been delegated. Fifteen of the teachers interviewed characterized the principal's management style as delegating responsibility. He spent most of his time working at his desk. (Indeed, Simeon was notable for the amount of staff time devoted to keeping of detailed records by all offices; duties for some teachers included working a period or two in the attendance or programming offices.) Most of the teachers said that the principal evaluated their teaching and asked for lesson plans once a year; eight also stated that an assistant principal evaluated teachers and sent general memos concerning improving teaching methods. Again, regarding student discipline, 18 of the teachers described the principal as delegating this responsibility. Teachers had mixed opinions concerning the principal as disciplinarian. About half believed him to be a moderate or stern disciplinarian. The other 50% characterized him as lenient or inconsistent. Five students thought he was too strict, three said he was too lenient, but over half answered that discipline under him was just right. Consistent with his leadership role, the principal's philosophy for administering the school was general and non-specific -- creating an environment in the school that would make teachers and students want to stay.

By contrast, the principal at Westinghouse articulated very specific goals: to make the school safe, clean, and disciplined; to get students involved in activities; and to improve the teaching methods of teachers. Appointed principal in 1982, he had set out to implement these goals immediately, in the process generating antagonism among some of the teachers. Overall, however, he was judged by staff to be very effective, particularly in the areas of public relations, in bringing discipline to the school, and in stressing the academic. Most teachers characterized his management style as "soliciting staff opinions but ultimately making the decisions" or "sending down decisions from the top." The principal himself believed that many teachrs saw him as autocratic. He instituted stronger discipline requirements for teachers, insisting that they be on time, hand in lesson plans every six weeks, and be at their duty posts. Not surprisingly, 17 out 20 teachers said that there had been major conflicts between the teachers and principal. (In contrast eight teachers at Simeon stated that there had been no conflicts, at least none that they were aware of). The major disputes between the principal and the teachers at Westinghouse concerned failure rates, lesson plan books, discipline, tardiness and attendance, and the absence of attempts to gain staff support for changes. Several teachers felt that the principal was not as responsive as he had been when he first came and that discipline was slipping.

The former principal at Westinghouse, by a number of staff accounts, gave up when the school did not become a regional school, the role for which it was initially planned. Characterized by one teacher as an embittered man, he did not provide the school with strong leadership, preferring to spend much of his time in his office. Some teachers liked him because he was not demanding. On the other hand, teachers who wanted to try something innovative were told "no" or even slapped with an E-1 (Unsatisfactory) rating. As one teacher put it, "He felt that anyone who came here could not learn." The present principal and some teachers indicated that, when he arrived, the school was lacking in discipline among both students and faculty. As was the case with Hubbard's previous principal, there was no unity or stardardization within departments. However, other teachers saw less difference between the two administrations than between the quality, motivation and preparedness of students in the last five years.

E. SUMMARY OF PRINCIPAL LEADERSHIP

In three of the four pairs of schools, the school with the lower dropout rate was headed by the stronger principal who provided effective leadership during the period 1978-84. Simeon and Westinghouse appear to be the exception. However, since the present, more effective, principal at Westinghouse assumed his position in 1982, the dropout rate has actually increased by more than 5%. Much of the increase can probably be explained by an increase in the percentage of students entering with lower reading scores.

II. DISCIPLINE AND SAFETY IN THE SCHOOL

In three out of the four pairs of schools, students in the lower dropout school were more orderly and disciplined in the halls, lunchroom and other areas of the school. The exception was Bowen and Wells, where the ethnographer could perceive no real difference in discipline. There

may have been more difference between these two schools in the past, however, since a campaign to decrease tardiness and absenteeism and to improve discipline in the halls had just been instituted at Wells as the study period began. It should be noted that while differences in discipline in the halls and lunchrooms were noticeable in the other three pairs of schools, the variation in classroom discipline was greater within a school than between schools. This is not surprising since the variation among teachers is also greater within a school than between schools, and teachers are generally responsible for maintaining order within classrooms.

The lower dropout school was also perceived as safer by students and teachers in most pairs. An exception to this was the Simeon and Westinghouse pair; both schools were rated as very safe by staff and students.

A. DUSABLE AND COLLINS

The ethnographer observed more discipline in the halls, bathrooms, and other areas at Collins. Far more students were encountered in the halls during class at DuSable. However, at the same time, sample one month in-house suspension rates at these schools indicate far fewer disciplinary actions against cutting class at DuSable (120 referrals for cutting at Collins; 12 at DuSable for the same offense). Similarly, the ethnographer observed students entering the classroom after the bell had rung in 18 out of 20 observed classes at DuSable; in only 10 classes at Collins were students tardy. While the third floor in both schools was less orderly, the lack of adult supervision on this floor at DuSable was a serious problem. Since the former principal at Collins had the reputation of being a stern disciplinarian, it can be assumed that discipline and order in the halls under his administration was at least as pervasive.

The halls, lunchroom and bathrooms at Collins were deemed "sometimes" to "always safe" by students; the same areas at DuSable were rated by most as "sometimes" to "never" safe. Fourteen of 20 teachers felt Collins to be "nearly always" safe compared to eight at DuSable. Three at DuSable and only one teacher at Collins described the school as "almost never" safe. It was the ethnographer's perception that the number of doors (eight) through which entry could be gained at DuSable contributed significantly to the lack of perceived security there. Of course, these observations reflect the present; no data is available concerning student and staff perceptions of safety six or eight years ago.

B. WELLS AND BOWEN

The ethnographer found both schools to be similar as far as student discipline was concerned. In both, cutting and tardiness problems were compounded by the ease students had in leaving and returning to the supposedly closed campus. The discipline officer at Bowen felt that the size of the school and the numerous unguarded doors in the building made it difficult to control. In both schools, students were observed using drugs. Both schools were rated by students and faculty as "safe" to "moderately" safe; however, students at Wells perceived the area outside the building as more dangerous than did Bowen students.

C. HUBBARD AND WASHINGTON

The ethnographer at Hubbard and Washington noticed no real difference in discipline at present in the two schools. At Washington tardiness to classes was more of a problem, in part, because there was no attendance office at the school, and the handling of students tardy to class was left up to the individual teacher. It was left up to the teacher to handle. A number of teachers complained about cutting and that too many students could be seen in the halls between classes. Teachers were supposed to stand at their classroom doors during passing times and check nearby restrooms. The ethnographer heard few complaints at Washington that teachers were not performing their duties. Teachers at Hubbard indicated that there had been much less discipline at that school under the previous principal. Because teachers were not supervised, they were often not at their posts, and disorderliness among students, consequently, was much greater. Under the former administration, cutting was also much more common and less controllable, in part perhaps, because of the open campus policy. Discipline was less efficient and consistent because the discipline room was handled by several teachers during their duty periods instead of by full-time people as it is at present.

There was no difference in the perceptions of students and teachers as to the safety of the two schools. Most teachers rated the two schools as "always" safe. Equal numbers of students at both schools rated them as "sometimes" or "always" safe.

D. SIMEON AND WESTINGHOUSE

At Simeon and Westinghouse the biggest difference in discipline and order observed by the ethnographer was in the halls during class. When the bell rang at Westinghouse, students caught in the halls literally ran to their classrooms to avoid being marked tardy or locked out of class. By contast, at Simeon, several teachers and hall guards admitted they did not bother to report to their hall duties until several minutes after the bell because it was impossible to begin clearing the halls until then. In 15 of 20 classes observed at Simeon students entered after the bell had rung, in a number of cases five to ten minutes late. At Westinghouse, on the other hand, in only four classes were students tardy. The policy on tardiness there, although not always carried out consistently by all teachers and aides, was firm and clear: students were not to be admitted to class late without a note or reinstatement; those not excused received a cut for that period. Class cutting was also reported more frequently as a problem at Simeon, where the stairwells and angles and corners in halls provided numerous nooks and crannies for students to hide. More students at Simeon reported that they cut classes even though over twice as many of the students interviewed at Westinghouse said they had been sent to the discipline office for offenses including attendance.

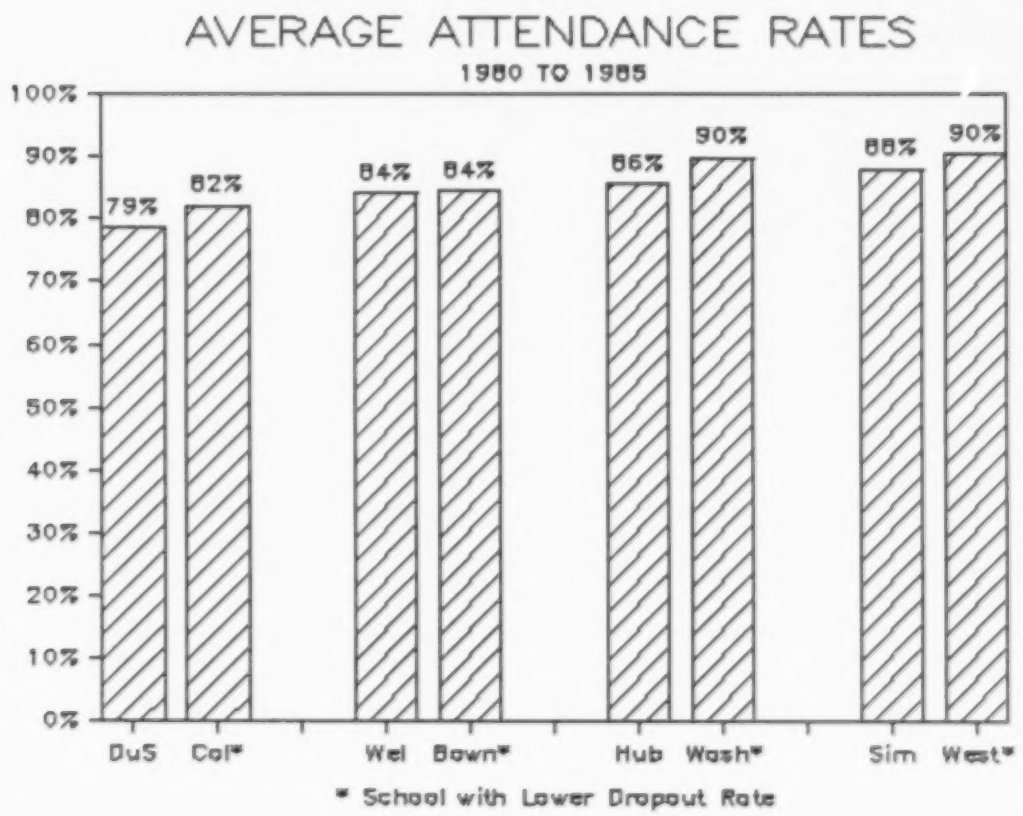
Almost three times as many teachers at Westinghouse, than at Simeon, reported that the school was always quiet and orderly. Although there were more students and more noise in Simeon's halls during class, in both schools students were generally orderly. Teachers and aides kept a close check on fighting; offenders at both schools were given suspensions. Teachers and students gave both schools high marks for safety.

According to Westinghouse teachers, the present principal tightened up discipline in general at the school by instituting and enforcing policies on cutting and tardiness. It would be impossible to say, however, how discipline under the previous principal at Westinghouse compared with that at Simeon.

III. ATTENDANCE

In three out of the four pairs of schools, student attendance at the lower dropout school was significantly better. Table 6 indicates that except in the case of Bowen and Wells, attendance rates were generally three or four percent higher in the lower dropout schools between 1979 and 1984. A paired T-test revealed that there was significant difference (at the .05 or .01 level) between the schools in each pair except Bowen and Wells. Not surprisingly attendance received different emphasis at the schools with lower and higher rates.

Figure 5



A. DUSABLE AND COLLINS

At Collins, in-school suspension was used extensively for attendance violations. For example, during one month of 1986, 120 of 128 offenses were attendance related. Neither school, however, had a functional computerized telephoning system, nor were phones readily available for teachers to call parents. Both schools had special attendance progams for students designated as being at risk of dropping out. DuSable's longer established program emphasized counseling, while the newer program at Collins was used primarily to monitor students.

B. WELLS AND BOWEN

Table 6 indicates that between 1979 and 1981 attendance at Bowen was higher than at Wells. However, between 1982 and 1984 this was reversed. At both of the schools, teachers reported "failures due to absence" were frequent. At Bowen two teachers reported 50% of their classes failing for lack of attendance. At Bowen, but not at Wells, a computerized telephoning system is in place. In addition there are more phones at Bowen for teachers and counselors to use in trying to reach students' homes. When the research in the schools was begun in March of 1986, an attendance office had just been created at Wells, and two new positions to deal with attendance problems had been established. In classroom observations, the ethnographer noted perfect attendance in 25% of the classrooms at Bowen, but only 15% at Wells.

C. HUBBARD AND WASHINGTON

Attendance contests were held at Washington; substantial prizes such as bicycles and radios were awarded in a drawing to some of those with perfect attendance. The school, however, lacked an attendance office. Counselors and division teachers handled reinstatements and called parents of absent students. At Hubbard, under the previous principal, the attendance policy was not enforced, teachers stated. One of the first changes the present principal made was to assign permanent, full-time staff to the attendance office. He also installed a computerized telephoning system and required that the division teachers call parents of absent students.

D. SIMEON AND WESTINGHOUSE

Both schools have computerized TELSOL machines that automatically call the homes of absent students; however, the system at Simeon had been operational for less than a year. A phone is provided in the counseling office for teachers at Simeon to call parents; some of the departmental offices, such as, Business, also have a phone. Division teachers are encouraged to call. Simeon also has an attendance office that is staffed by one of the coaches and a teacher during duty periods. In addition, the data processing department assists in entering the names of students absent from Division to create a daily absence bulletin. The only complaint from teachers was that the bulletin was sometimes a day or two late coming out which made it less useful. Students at Westinghouse were awarded buttons during class assemblies for perfect attendance. Although there was no full-time attendance office, the counselors worked in the mornings to help handle tardy students. They also called parents of students with attendance problems. A number of teachers also reported that they called the homes of absent division students.

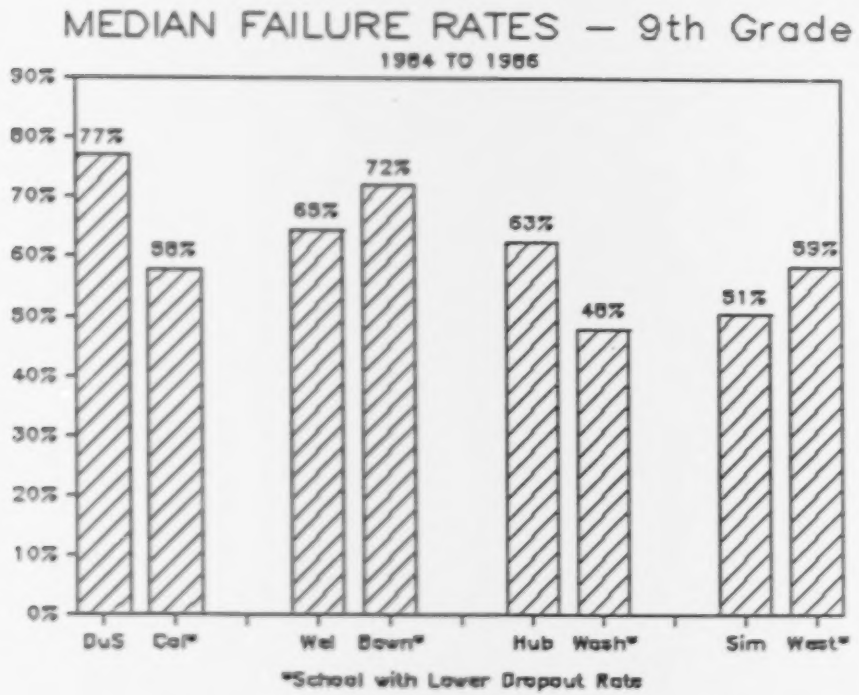
E. TEACHER ATTENDANCE

Teacher attendance was better at some of the lower dropout schools. Westinghouse, for example, has had 99% teacher attendance this year. The administration at Simeon indicated that teacher attendance fluctuated greatly between 2 or 3 a day to as high as 23 or almost 25%. Although teacher attendance was slightly better at Hubbard than at Washington this year, it may not have been in the past when teachers were less closely monitored.

IV. FAILURE RATES

Figure 6 and 7 indicate that while schools with the lower dropout rates also had lower failure rates in grade 11, the pattern was not so clear in grade nine.

Figure 6



The schools with the lower dropout rates in two of the pairs (DuSable/Collins and Hubbard/Washington) also had lower failure rates. In another pair (Simeon/Westinghouse) the school with the lower dropout rate had lower failure rates in some years and grades but not in others. The final pair offered a contrary finding with Bowen, the school with the lower dropout rate, reporting higher failure rates. (See Table 6.)

Failure rates may be a better indicator of future dropout rates than of present rates. If this is the case, it can be predicted that the dropout rate at Bowen may increase in the next few years while that at Hubbard should decline.

Figure 7

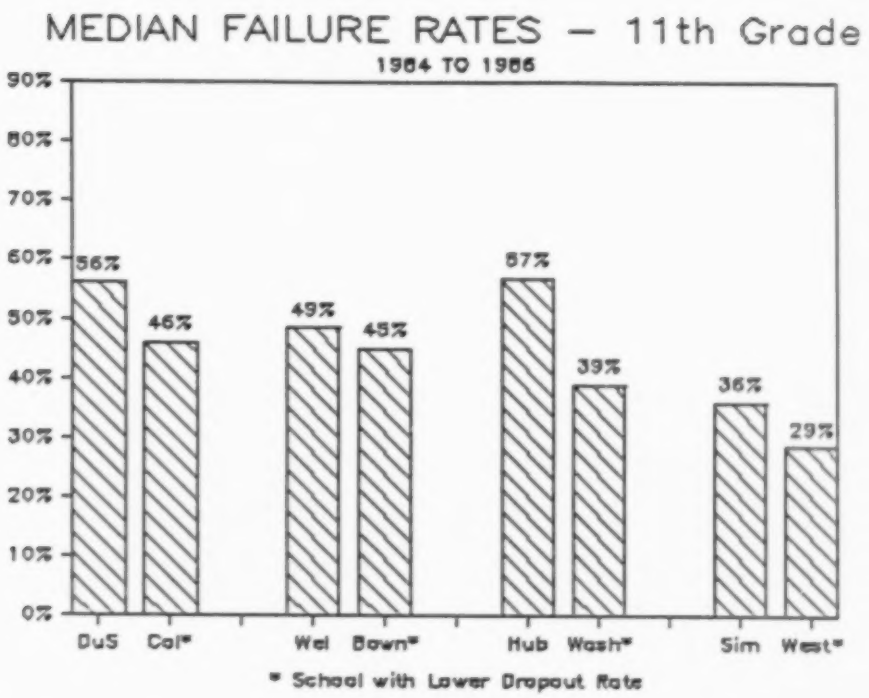


Table 6
JANUARY FAILURE RATES
1984, 1985 1986

Number Failures	DuSable 58%*	Collins 48%	Wells 56%	Bowen 48%	Hubbard 40%	Wash'ton 24%	Simeon 34%	Westhse 22%
Grade 9								
Jan. 84	81%	53%	67%	69%	71%	n/a	52%	n/a
Jan. 85	79%	63%	62%	75%	67%	n/a	50%	61%
Jan. 86	73%	63%	63%	70%	54%	48%	49%	56%
Grade 10								
Jan. 84	66%	68%	51%	56%	68%	n/a	40%	n/a
Jan. 85	75%	74%	61%	62%	63%	n/a	48%	34%
Jan. 86	81%	71%	53%	59%	56%	56%	45%	51%
Grade 11								
Jan. 84	54%	44%	41%	44%	51%	n/a	32%	n/a
Jan. 85	58%	48%	44%	44%	52%	n/a	35%	30%
Jan. 86	57%	46%	56%	46%	63%	39%	40%	27%
Grade 12								
Jan. 84	29%	34%	19%	34%	32%	n/a	14%	n/a
Jan. 85	44%	29%	23%	41%	33%	n/a	23%	10%
Jan. 86	43%	29%	29%	43%	26%	13%	15%	18%

n/a- Data not available on Board of Education computers

*1982 Dropout Rates

Policies towards failure rates and promotion differed among schools. Some schools, such as Westinghouse, demoted students beginning in the freshman year. Most of the schools did not demote students until the junior year. While most principals stated that reducing the failure rate was a goal, the emphasis it received at different schools varied. At Washington, Westinghouse and Hubbard, the principals were exerting pressure on teachers to reduce failure rate by altering their methods of instruction. Teachers at Westinghouse and Hubbard reported more conflict with the administration over this issue.

A. DUSABLE AND COLLINS

Table 6 indicates that Collins and DuSable showed the biggest difference in failure rates between schools in a pair. A much higher percentage of DuSable students failed one or more courses in each of the years 1984, 1985, and 1986. Although the promotional policies at both schools were similar, requiring two, six and ten credits respectively for students to begin the sophomore, junior and senior year, and both schools held that the best year to demote students was the sophomore year, in fact, only Collins held back significant numbers of sophomores.

B. WELLS AND BOWEN

Contrary to the findings in the other schools, the failure rates at Wells, the school with the higher dropout rate, were lower overall than at Bowen. One reason for higher failure rates at Bowen may have been related to the large numbers of failing grades given for absence, as reported by some teachers at Bowen. The most significant difference between the two schools was the larger number of seniors having one or more failing grades at Bowen. (See Table 6.)

C. HUBBARD AND WASHINGTON

Comparative data on failure rates for Washington and Hubbard is available for only one year - 1986. In January, 1986 failure rates at Washington were between 6% and 24% lower for each grade except tenth grade in which there was no difference.

The principal at Washington was strongly in favor of reducing the failure rate, noting that a 25% failure rate was too high, and indicative of faulty instructional methods. He stated that he held conferences with teachers whose failure rates were too high. Hubbard's present principal agreed that a high failure rate indicates poor instruction. He felt that there was a need to standardize within departments. The past principal had not checked lesson plans and each teacher graded as he or she wished. Standardization was a source of conflict between the teachers and present principal at Hubbard. The policy in the past at Hubbard was to wait until the junior year to demote a student. This year teachers voted to begin demoting sophomores. At Washington, too, students are not held back until they are juniors.

D. SIMEON AND WESTINGHOUSE

Failure rates tended to be lower for juniors and senior at Westinghouse, the school with the lower dropout rate, than those at Simeon. However, failure rates for freshmen were higher at Westinghouse in 1985 and 1986, the only yearsfor which data is available for both schools. This may reflect the fact that entering freshmen at Simeon have had higher reading scores in recent years than those at Westinghouse.

The principal at Simeon believed the distribution of grades should resemble a bell curve. He stated that teachers who were failing too many students were called in for a conference on testing and teaching methods. One of the assistant principals added that the great disparity in failure rates among teachers indicated that teachers had too much power. One of the top priorities of the present principal at Westinghouse was to reduce failure rates. He began calculating each teacher's failure rate and including it with the paycheck. Anyone with a failure rate over 35% was required to come in for a conference, although the principal believed that anything over 20% was too high. A second strategy was to require daily lesson plans which he checked every six weeks. He encouraged changing teaching methods and calling parents. Teachers had been using failures as punitive measures when he first came to the school, he stated; now he recommended grade changes up to the last day if a student showed improvement. As at Hubbard, failure rates were a bone of contention between the principal and teachers.

In both schools the counseling offices devoted considerable effort to identifying students who were failing a course and counseling them to attend summer school. At Westinghouse, students were demoted beginning in the freshman year (about 15%). Some of those would transfer, others would attend summer school in order to make up credits. Westinghouse planned to hold a free summer school in the summer of 1986. During the previous summer (1985), Simeon held free summer school for those students with two or more failures. However, the only students demoted at Simeon were juniors.

V. CLASSROOM INSTRUCTION TIME AND INTERACTIVE TEACHING

Two interesting findings emerged, when the 20 classroom observations for each school were analyzed. First, in three out of the four pairs of schools, teachers in the school with the lower dropout rate devoted considerably more time to active instruction (discussions or lectures) as opposed to seatwork (See Table 7 and Figure 8). Chi-Square tests revealed these difference to be significant at the .001 significance level. However, teachers at Simeon, the school with the higher dropout rate, devoted the same proportion of time to active classroom instruction as did their colleagues at Westinghouse. It is interesting to note, however, that approximately ten percent of this instructional time at Simeon was spent going over homework in class. At Westinghouse only two percent of active classroom instruction involved reviewing homework. (A cautionary note: due to differences in ethnographer perceptions, valid comparisons can only be made between pairs of schools observed by the same person, not between schools in different pairs.)

Figure 8

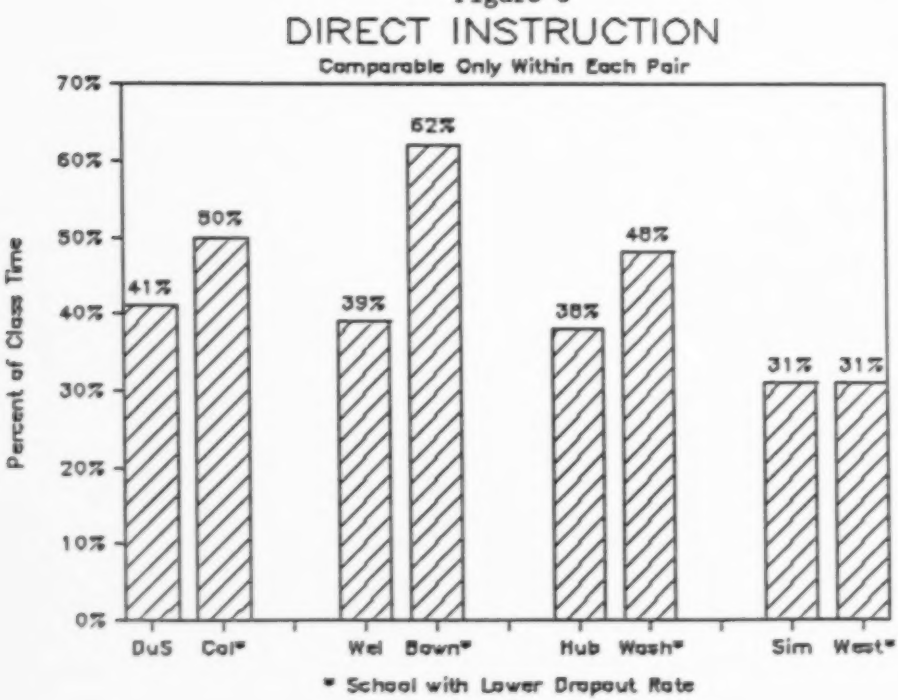


Table 7

PERCENT OF TIME SPENT IN DIRECT CLASSROOM INSTRUCTION
vs. SEATWORK AT EACH SCHOOL*

High School	Active Class Instruction	Seatwork	Non-Instruc'l Activity	Other Activity
DuSable	41%	36%	6%	17%
Collins	50%	35%	6%	8%
Wells	39%	48%	10%	3%
Bowen	62%	25%	11%	3%
Hubbard	38%	40%	13%	9%
Washington	48%	28%	12%	11%
Simeon	31%	36%	20%	14%
Westinghouse	31%	40%	18%	11%

*Due to differences between ethnographers, schools should not be compared across pairings.

Active Class Instruction - lectures and question and answer discussion
Seatwork - unsupervised seatwork and supervision of individual student work
Non-instructional Activity - taking attendance, dressing for gym, set up, assignments and announcements
Other Activity - time lost due to disciplining, tardiness of teacher, talking to ethnographer, and general chaos.

Second, in three of the four pairs there was more interactive teaching (individual supervision or question and answer discussion) than non-interactive teaching (lectures or unsupervised seatwork) in the school with the lower dropout rate. (See Table 8 and Figure 9.) Interactive teaching was defined as instruction in which the teacher is actively interacting with the students either through question and answer discussions, supervised group work during which the teacher circulates among the groups, or supervised individual seatwork where the teacher actively instructs students individually. Interactive teaching can be contrasted with non-interactive in which the teacher assigns students a task and engages in another activity, such as grading papers while the students work on their own.

The difference between two pairs, DuSable/Collin and Hubbard/Washington, was significant at the .001 level, using the Chi-Square test. While there was a difference in the expected direction between Westinghouse and Simeon, it was not quite significant at the .05 level. There was no significant difference between Wells and Bowen.

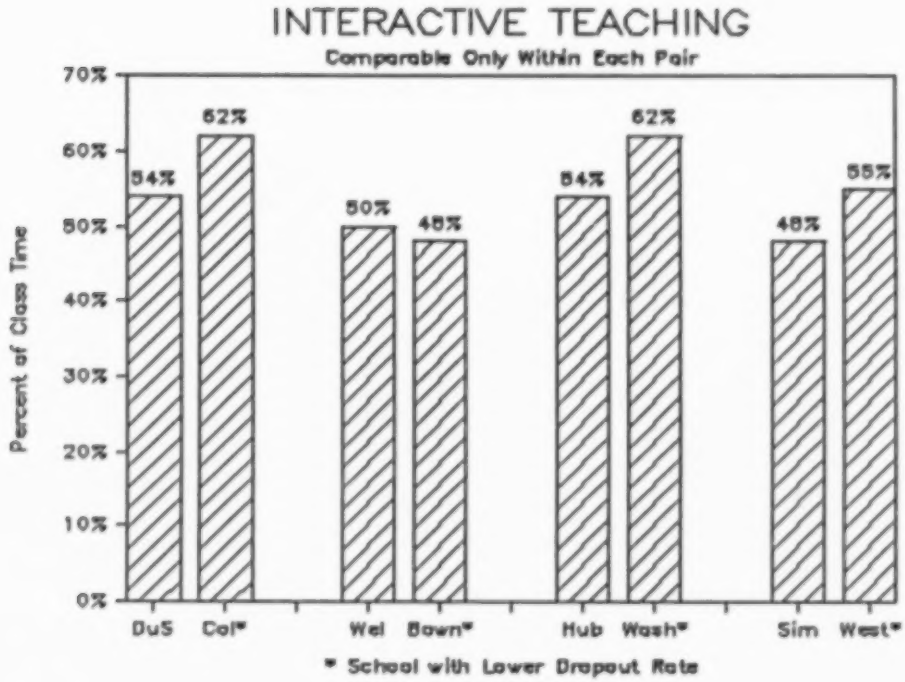
Again, because the judgments of ethnographers undoubtedly differed in scoring the classroom observations, one must be careful in comparing non-paired schools in Tables 7 and 8. However, in the "Other" column on these tables, DuSable stands out as a school in which there is an inordinate amount of class time lost to instruction due to the tardiness of teachers or students, talking, and discipline problems.

VI. MAINTENANCE OF FACILITIES

In two of the pairs, the physical facilities were in better condition at the school with the lower dropout rate. Much of the difference could be accounted for by newness of the building (Collins) or its better suitablity to house a school (Westinghouse), but there were also some differences in the maintenance and in the resourcefulness of the principal in getting extra money or organizing parents to lobby for funds. While buildings and their maintenance, *per se*, can not be said to cause a higher dropout rate, good, well kept facilities do contribute to the to an environment that is conducive to learning. It is important that in both of the pairs with marked differences in facilities, the lower dropout rate school is housed in the better building.

Simeon and Westinghouse offer one example. While both are housed in former warehouses, the physical facilities are better suited for a school at Westinghouse. The present principal at Westinghouse also has been very successful in organizing parents to lobby the School Board for funds to improve the building. Although building engineers at both schools emphasized the importance of removing graffiti immediately to keep further incidences in check, this policy was more quickly and consistently carried out at Westinghouse. One factor which appeared to make considerable difference in the attractiveness was whether teachers had their own classrooms. At Westinghouse teachers were more likely to decorate and post student work on bulletin boards and to remove graffiti from desktops than at Simeon where two or more teachers were forced to share a classroom. Finally, it must be noted that a new gymnasium was scheduled for construction at Simeon during 1986.

Figure 9



PERCENT OF TIME SPENT IN INTERACTIVE
vs. NON-INTERACTIVE TEACHING*

High School	Interactive Teaching	Non-Int'active Teaching	Non-Instruc'l Activity	Other Activity
DuSable	54%	23%	6%	17%
Collins	62%	23%	6%	8%
Wells	50%	38%	10%	3%
Bowen	48%	39%	11%	3%
Hubbard	54%	24%	13%	9%
Washington	62%	15%	12%	11%
Simeon	48%	19%	20%	14%
Westinghouse	55%	16%	18%	11%

*Due to differences between ethnographers, schools should not be compared across pairings.

Interactive Teaching - supervised individual work, question/answer discussions, and tests
Non-interactive Teaching - unsupervised seatwork and lectures
Non-instructional Activity - taking attendance, dressing for gym, set up, assignments and announcements
Other Activity - time lost due to disciplining, tardiness of teacher, talking to ethnographer, and general chaos.

VII. POLITICAL DISSENSION

An interesting factor was the greater degree of political dissension between faculty and administration in the schools with the lower dropout rates. This phenomenon was associated with schools with the lower dropout rate in three out of the four pairs. This difference might be a function of the management style of the principal, since those principals who were judged to take a stronger, more assertive leadership role were also those who tended to generate the most conflict. This was particularly true in the cases where a new, strong principal replaced one who had taken a more laissez-faire role towards supervising teachers and enforcing policies, as at Hubbard and Westinghouse.

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